THE

COUNTRY CURATE.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "THE SUBALTERN," AND
"THE CHELSEA PENSIONERS."

A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year.

GOLDSMITH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN AND RICHARD BENTLEY,
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1830.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

ADVERTISEMENT.

Of the following sketches there is not one which cannot lay claim to be founded upon fact,—whilst there are several which deserve to be received as little more than plain narratives of real occurrences. The Miser, for example, will, I doubt not, be recognized by many persons now living in the Weald of Kent; the Poacher flourished not long ago in a village not far from Ashford, in the same county; the Smuggler ran his risks within the memory of the last generation; and even the Parish Apprentice is no creation of the fancy. His history is given, almost as it is given here, in an old volume of the Scotch Magazine; only that he is stated to have perpetrated his crimes not in

Kent, but in Yorkshire. I mention these facts in order to shield myself from the charge of devising fables too monstrous for credibility; and to convince my readers, that actual every-day life teems with adventures not less extraordinary than are recorded in the pages of the poet or romance-writer.

I have only to add, that the plan of this Work was devised several years ago; that the Introduction, with three of the tales, appeared in Blackwood's Magazine; and that the substance of a fourth was given in Friendship's Offering, for 1827.

November, 1829.



THE COUNTRY CURATE.

INTRODUCTION.

THE ordinary traveller who journeys from London to Paris, and who is not greatly in the habit of diverging from the beaten track,—who neither sees, nor desires to see, more of the country, through which he passes, than the fields on each side of the highway may chance to present,—can form no idea of the rude and romantic scenery which is occasionally to be met with, even in the southern county of Kent. I am not quite sure that the border districts of Scotland itself can boast of glens more striking, or hills more wild and pastoral, than are to be

found in this the cultivated garden of England. The general aspect of the country is, indeed, rather beautiful than grand; swelling downs, luxuriant corn-fields, rich hop-gardens, and exquisite hedge-rows, furnishing the more customary features in a Kentish landscape. But Kent is not altogether deficient in what deserves to be ranked as the sublime; and it may be worth while to inform this wandering generation, whereabouts it behoves them to look for it.

Soon after he has passed the race-course on Barham Downs, the way-faring man will arrive at a sort of by-road, which, striking off from the highway in a direction to the right, winds between a couple of fir plantations that skirt the extremities of Denne Hill and Broom. Let him pursue this path without hesitation. It leads across a wild country to Folkestone and Hythe; and it conducts to the very glens and hills of which notice has just been given. As he goes on, he will perceive a change in the aspect of external things, not less remarkable, perhaps, than any which he may have previously noted. Cultivation will soon end with

him, or if it continue at all, it will be in that melancholy state which seems to indicate that the plough ought never to have reached those regions, over which Nature, and Nature alone, had asserted her supremacy. He will see, it is true, a few spots here and there broken up on the side of a bleak hill, but even in these, the ploughshare has cast up gravel, rather than soil; whilst round them, and above them, all is pasturage, if not rankly luxuriant, at least abundant—short thick grass, such as grows along the sides of the Ochils, or over the summits of the Lomonds. This is the general covering of the hills. Few trees flourish here, and the few that are, consist of dwarf fir and stinted oak; whilst, from time to time, abrupt precipices of white chalk intervene, as if to diversify the extent of green which might otherwise pall upon the eye.

In a pastoral country like this, it is probably needless to say, that glens and valleys of a very striking appearance run in all directions among the waving hills. The road, indeed, winds, in more places than one, along the summit of as beautiful a vale as the crowd-

ing in of grass-covered eminences is capable of producing. In general, these valleys are narrow, resembling ravines rather than glens; and the only herbage which grows to any height down them, is the fern and the gorze. But they are often deep; it may be a couple of hundred feet or more from the level of the pathway, whilst the hills which surround them arise to perhaps the same altitude above the head of the gazer. He who wishes to visit this country at an advantageous season, is recommended to choose, not the height of summer, but the spring, or the fall of the year. A bright sunshine suits not such scenery. In its blaze, you see things too plainly; even a mountain, however lofty, being but half a mountain, when you can distinguish a sheep upon its summit. The traveller who is really in earnest in looking out for the sublime, is accordingly advised to traverse the Folkestone hills, whilst a storm of rain and wind is abroad. If the blast drive directly in his face, so much the better. But failing the happy occurrence of such a storm, let him at least select a day of thick fog. Then when the tops of the hills are shrouded, and

the bottoms of the glens invisible, he may very well be pardoned, whether a cockney or not, if he fancy himself, not among the downs of Kent, but among the wildest productions of uncultivated nature.

In one of the most striking of these glens, the last indeed which occurs before you obtain a view of Folkestone and of the British Channel, stands the church and parsonage of St. Alphage. They are the only buildings distinctly visible to the traveller; and to see even these, he must abandon the beaten track, and swerve considerably to the right. They lie at the very gorge of a deep dark vale, just where it seems to end in a narrow pass, which, winding away around the elbow of a green hill, conducts you know not whither. The church is an old-fashioned, unassuming structure, built of round shingle-stones, called boulders, and covered over with the flat gray-stone, which our forefathers were in the habit of using instead of slate. It belongs to no class of architecture whatever; it is neither Saxon nor Gothic; though, if pointed arches in the doors and windows be undeniable proofs

of Gothic architecture, they are certainly to be found here. There is no steeple attached to it; a little wooden belfry, in which hangs a single bell, being meant to represent one; and the entire temple, including its gallery, is capable of containing, provided they sit close, perhaps three hundred people.

This little edifice is surrounded by a churchyard, which, for the extremely good taste in which it is preserved, might serve as a model to the cemeteries of many more assuming houses of God. It is begirt by a wooden paling, painted purely white, in which the traveller, let him view it when he may, will perceive neither break nor dilapidation. Four gravel-walks run from the four corners of the fence, where neat gates are suspended; and meet, or rather end, in a broader walk which surrounds the church itself. A few aged yews are scattered, apparently at random, among the graves; and a row of elms adorns that side of the square which looks towards the vicarage. But there are no gorgeous monuments here; no spots railed round, as if the ashes of one man were too pure to be mingled with the ashes

of another; an air of primitive equality is spread, on the contrary, over the place, where, if ever it is to be sought for at all, it ought surely to be found. Even head and foot-stones are not very abundant in the church-yard of St. Alphage, and such as appear mark the resting-places of men who filled no higher rank in society than that of graziers or pilots; whilst of wooden crosses a more than usual proportion exists, all of which seem to be objects of care and veneration to the parishioners.

I confess myself to be one of those who are prone to form a judgment of the habits and dispositions of men in a country place, from the degree of respect which they pay to the graves of their fathers. When I behold a church-yard kept as is that just described, I am apt to think kindly of the inhabitants of the parish, as an innocent and unvitiated race of people. When, on the contrary, the village church-yard forms the play-ground for their children; when its fences are broken down, and the green sod torn from its little mounds; when the yews, which its former owners planted, are stripped of their branches, not by time, but by the

hands of rude urchins; and when, in addition to these marks of carelessness, proofs of petty pride present themselves in the shape of tombs clumsily constructed and vilely inscribed, I cannot divest my mind of the persuasion, that the people are dissolute and cold-hearted; that the odious distinctions of modern society have made too much progress among them; and that the farmers are grinding and vain, the peasantry drunken and dishonest. No doubt I have been sometimes deceived in these conclusions; but I have much more frequently found them to be correct.

Divided only by its neat garden from the western side of the church-yard, stands the vicarage-house, the very representative of what English vicarages were wont to be in the days of our great-grandfathers. It is a cottage of one story high, containing two little parlours, a kitchen, and a few closets on the ground-floor; whilst three excellent garrets, rendered more commodious by their storm windows, furnish all the dormitory considered necessary for the family of an humble vicar. Of its parlours, indeed, the little green-room which looks into the

garden behind, is, comparatively speaking, a modern addition; whilst a long wash-house, or scullery, has likewise been tacked-on, of late, to one of the gables, more as a matter of convenience than of ornament. Nevertheless, the general appearance of the mansion—with its tiled roof, its walls white as the drifted snow, except in those parts where they are covered with jessamine and china-roses—its green entrance-door, ornamented by narrow window-lights on each side, and its little leaded casements—cannot fail to attract the notice of him who loves to think of religion as the parent of peace and humility; and of its teachers, not as mingling with the great and the titled of the land, but as setting an example of meekness and lowliness of heart to their several congregations.

In perfect keeping with the size and construction of the house, are the grounds by which it is surrounded. Here are no extensive lawns, so laid out as to require the constant attention of a couple of gardeners to hinder them from running wild and bringing discredit on the taste of the proprietor; no beds of foreign and expensive flowers show their gaudy

colours to the sun; nor have the trees which gird the little paddock and inclose the garden, been brought from afar. A meadow, containing, perhaps, three acres of land, forms at once the glebe and the domain of the vicar. It lies chiefly in front, and on the right of the parsonage; only a narrow strip winding round the left, to join the garden with the church-yard; and it is begirt by a well-trimmed hawthorn hedge, which is never suffered to exceed the height of four feet from the ground. In the centre of this hedge, and directly opposite to the door of the house, is a green swing gate, on opening which, and passing through the meadow, you come to another little hedge, drawn, at the distance of perhaps twenty feet, entirely round the vicarage. Within this a belt of genuine English shrubs—of lilacs, laburnums, guelder-roses, mountain-ash, and filberts, is planted, which overshadow, on each side, a gravel-walk, and embosom the cottage in their green leaves. On the left, however, the belt swells out into a little thicket, concealing the stable, and other offices attached; beside which grow several taller trees, such as the fir, the

beech, and the poplar; while behind the thicket is a little fish-pond, having a well-trimmed grass-walk carried round it, and several elegant weeping willows dropping their tresses into the water. Such are, properly speaking, its pleasure-grounds; and if to this be added a kitchen-garden, well filled with apple and plum-trees, and bisected by a broad turf-walk, on each side of which grow roses and hyacinths, and lilies of the valley, with violets and blue bells, and here and there a lofty holly-hock—a tolerably correct notion will be formed, even by such as never have, and never may behold the place itself, of the unassuming vicarage of St. Alphage.

In this secluded spot dwelt for fifteen years one of the most kind-hearted and pious individuals of whom the Church of England has cause to boast. Of him the world knew nothing. Like other men, he was ambitious of fame when he first started into life; but misfortunes, neither romantic nor uncommon, taught him to curb his ambition, and to seek for happiness, not in this world, but in a better. It is to him, indeed, more than to any other person, that the vicarage of St. Alphage owes all of simple

beauty which is around it. There is not a shrub upon the premises which was not planted by his hand; and the elms which adorn the church-yard, form the only monument which his modesty would suffer to be raised to his memory. As I have undertaken the care of his papers, and propose to make the public acquainted with their contents, it may not be amiss if I premise that task with some account of the author. Not that the life of a country curate can have in it much of general interest, —and the life of my friend was not greatly different from that of other curates,—but his sketches being for the most part sombre, it appears but reasonable to assign some cause why melancholy subjects should have taken a faster hold upon his mind than subjects of a lighter nature: and that, I think, the detail of his own brief career will effect.

CHAPTER I.

THE PASTOR.

ABRAHAM WILLIAMS, the subject of this memoir, was the son of a clergyman in North Wales, whose preferment, though not extensive, enabled him to support in gentility and apparent comfort a family which consisted only of his wife and two children. Of the latter, Abraham was the elder by four years, the girl having been born, as Benjamin was born to Jacob, in the old age of her father; for Mr. Williams, like many other English clergymen, had found it impossible to marry till he was considerably advanced in life. Neither he nor his wife were scions of any noble stock. She was the daughter of a retired major in the army, and he the representative of a long line of ancestors, who had all followed the profession

to which he was himself devoted; and who had succeeded, generally after thirty or forty years' apprenticeship, in obtaining some small rectory, or poor vicarage, from the bishop of the diocese, or from the colleges of which they were members.

Mr. Williams, the father of my much-respected friend, was among the number of those whose benefices were bestowed upon them by their colleges. For five-and-twenty years he had held a fellowship in Jesus College, Oxford, in which house of conviviality and good-humour no one was more good-humoured and convivial than he; and as he obtained the situation almost as soon as he took his degree, no opportunity was afforded him of learning the important lesson, that he whose subsistence depends wholly upon a life-annuity, ought never, at least, to exceed it. The consequence was, that when, at the age of fifty-three, the worthy man found a college-living at his option, and himself thereby enabled to fulfil a loving engagement of some twenty years' standing, he prepared to occupy the one and to make good the other, not, indeed, encumbered with heavy

debts, but without possessing money enough to defray the expenses attendant upon induction, the payment of the first-fruits, and the purchase of a licence. His preferment was not, however, rated highly in the King's Books, and the price of a licence was then more reasonable than it is at present; so he borrowed twenty guineas from a friend, and went with that sum in his pocket to marry a wife and to take possession of his benefice.

Mrs. Williams' fortune, which amounted to two hundred and fifty pounds, barely sufficed to furnish the parsonage, and to purchase such conveniences, both in-doors and out, as were considered indispensable to the rectorial establishment. The good rector accordingly began his wedded career without one sixpence in his purse to defray the daily cost of housekeeping; and hence, long before tithe-day came round, the sum total of the proceeds of his rectory was absolutely forestalled to meet current expenses. But Mr. Williams was too good-hearted and too thoughtless to regard this. As soon as the compositions came in, they were paid away to last year's creditors, and the necessaries for the

year in-coming were procured, as those of the year preceding had been procured, upon trust. By this means, there was one day in every three hundred and sixty-five, at the return of which he could boast of being clear with the world; and there was not one hour in the course of twelve long months, when he could truly affirm that he was worth a penny.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Williams were, however, blessed with that calmness of temper, which hindered them from anticipating evils, and from embittering a present enjoyment by any over-cautious prying into futurity. Occasionally, indeed, the latter, who was several years younger than her husband, would remind him of the uncertainty of human life, and advise him to curtail his expenses, in order that he might save something for his family in case he should be prematurely called away. But to exhortations of this kind the good man would reply by recommending an implicit trust in Providence, which never, he said, deserts the righteous man, or suffers his children to beg their bread. It was likewise a maxim with him, that the clergy have no right to accumulate fortunes for their

families out of the proceeds of their livings. "We are stewards of the poor," added he, "and society, in all its branches, has peculiar claims upon us. We ought not to live unsociably, because, by avoiding a friendly intercourse with our neighbours, we withdraw from them that example which it is our duty to set even in our hours of hilarity; whilst in matters of charity, he who comes not freely forward himself, cannot reasonably expect that his preaching or admonitions will have much weight with others." Perhaps the worthy rector carried his ideas on these heads somewhat too far; but his broad view of the duties of a parish priest were correct; and they are, I will venture to say, entertained to this hour by no trifling majority of his much-slandered brethren.

When such were his abstract notions of things, it will readily be believed, that Mr. Williams' practice in no respect contradicted them. Even against the wandering beggar his door was never shut. To the poor and the sick among his own flock he was a father and a friend; whilst his bread, his cheese, his cold meat, and his beer, were at the command of all

who chose to visit his kitchen. Being of a cheerful and happy temperament, too, he freely met the advances of what is called a respectable and wealthy neighbourhood, among whom his gentlemanly manners and cultivated mind rendered him at all times an agreeable visitant. Thus, upon a rectory of five hundred pounds per annum, was the father of my friend accustomed to keep up an establishment, and to support appearances, which it would have been scarcely prudent to support, had his estate been a real one; whilst his children, educated in the midst of seeming abundance, ran no slight risk of acquiring notions very little in agreement with their future fortunes.

The first eighteen years of Abraham's life were not marked by the occurrence of any incident worthy to be recorded. During their progress, he had resided constantly at home, and was well-instructed in classical and mathematical lore by his father, whose most anxious wish was, that he might be admitted into holy orders, and elected to a fellowship at Jesus, before he himself should go hence and be no more seen. As a necessary consequence upon

this system of domestic culture, the lad grew up with feelings of the warmest attachment to his relations; and another tie was also formed, which, though pure and sacred in itself, effectually defeated, by its melancholy issue, the only chance which the son of an unknown country clergyman possessed, of making his way in the profession which had been chalked out for him.

Not far from the residence of Mr. Williams dwelt a widow lady of the name of Evans, who, with an only daughter, inhabited a neat cottage, and subsisted upon a scanty pittance, which her husband, the former incumbent of the parish, had left. Julia Evans was two years younger than Abraham, a gentle, delicate, and retiring creature; in whose soft blue eye, and exquisitely pure complexion, the most common observer might behold the prognostications of a premature dissolution. She was the sole surviving child of seven, who had all, one after another, dropped into their graves. just as their parents began to count upon their attaining to the full vigour of manhood. Of her, therefore, the most anxious care had been taken; and now her widowed mother breathed

hardly another prayer to Heaven, except that it would be pleased to preserve for her a life, which even she could not but observe to be suspended by a single hair. Between Mr. Williams' family and that of Mrs. Evans an intimate acquaintance subsisted; and it brought about, as might have been anticipated, the most ardent and romantic attachment on the parts of Abraham and Julia towards each other.

Abraham Williams had passed his eighteenth year, when his father deemed it necessary that he should remove to College. It was a bitter parting between the youth and his relatives, but the parting with Julia was more bitter by far. Yet there was a keenness of enjoyment in the latter which perhaps more than counterbalanced its bitterness. The young people had hitherto been to each other as brother and sister; they loved tenderly and ardently, but they knew not the real nature of the love which subsisted between them. How should they, indeed?—how should a boy of eighteen, and a girl of sixteen, who met every day with all the unreserved confidence of childhood, know that their love was different in kind

from that which the one felt for her only parent, the other for his parents and his sister? It is the moment of parting, which, in such cases, divulges the truth; nor is there a moment in all the years of our after-existence more wildly, yet purely delightful, than that in which the discovery is first made. Young as they were, Abraham and Julia exchanged vows of eternal fidelity before the last embrace was given. These vows were never broken, yet they were never fulfilled.

How often has my poor friend spoken to me of that hour! "I had bidden farewell to her mother," he said, "and was preparing to do the same by Julia, when she suddenly turned away from me, and quitted the room. I followed her instantly, and found her leaning against the paling which overhangs the brook, and weeping bitterly. It was a soft serene evening in October; the withered leaves were lying in quantities on the path, and the few which still clung to the branches overhead, were sere and yellow, and rustled sadly as the quiet air moved them. The sun had set, but daylight had not yet passed away. I can-

not paint to you her look of agony, when I put my arm round her waist, and, gently pressing her soft hand in mine, murmured, what I could not speak, something about comfort and farewell. The tears were flowing fast from her beautiful eyes, and mine too gushed out in torrents. 'Farewell, Julia,' said I at length, 'you will sometimes think of me when I am gone, and, as you follow our favourite walk, or sit beside that little stream, you will wish that I were beside you, and look forward with satisfaction to the day of my return.' I shall never forget her reply. Every word of it sank deep into my memory, and can never be erased while memory lasts. 'Think of you, Abraham!' cried she, 'shall I ever think of aught besides? What will these walks, or that stream be to me when you are gone! Nothing, nothing! I will never follow them, I will never sit down where we have so often sat together, till you return.'—It was then," continued he, "that I felt how passionately I loved her; and then, for the first time, I spoke to her of love. From that moment we were betrothed! O God, O God, how vainly!"

Abraham and myself entered College together. We were matriculated on the same day, we attended the same lectures, we belonged to the same set, and going forward together in our academical course, we passed our examination on the same morning, and on the same morning took our degree. From that period we never wholly lost sight of each other, though our different walks in life kept us generally apart; but the intercourse which could not be continued in person was constantly maintained by letter. Hence it is, that though we separated before his misfortunes began, I was not kept ignorant of them, and am now enabled to detail them in the order in which they occurred.

It has sometimes been doubted whether an early attachment be or be not of advantage to a youth, who must make his way in the world. For my own part, I am decidedly of opinion, that if his affections be properly bestowed, such an occurrence is always advantageous to him; and the case of my poor friend fully justifies me in adhering to that opinion. Though of a disposition naturally gay, Abraham Williams

never, during the entire course of his college life, ran into the follies and excesses of which most of his companions were guilty. Not that he was either niggardly or parsimonious; no man lived more like a gentleman than he; but there was a degree of seriousness about him such as very rarely shows itself in the deportment of a reasonable and sensible youth under twenty years of age. Where morose fanaticism prevails, then indeed we cannot wonder that the fanatic should be sober and cautious; but Williams was no fanatic, though a very pattern of sobriety and good conduct. The consequence was, that he made amazing proficiency in his studies; and the proudest desire of his excellent father was gratified by beholding him, at the early age of two-and-twenty, numbered among the respectable fellows of Jesus' College.

In the mean while the attachment between the young people continued daily to increase; and joyful was the heart of the poor widow when she beheld the last prop of her old age an object of regard to a young man so highly and so justly respected. But Julia loved too warmly. Sweet

and gentle as her outward manner was, her heart was the abode of feelings not more pure than enthusiastic, and these preyed upon a constitution greatly too delicate to support a struggle with hope deferred; for all Abraham's success brought not the day of their union nearer. As fellow of a College he could not marry, and both he and she were aware, that his only chance of preferment was from the society of which he was a member, and which had bestowed his preferment upon his father. At each visit which he paid to his paternal fire-side, the lover was accordingly more and more shocked at the change in Julia's appearance; though, when he was by, she was all life and spirits, and her cheek glowed and her eye danced as they had been wont to do in other days. But as soon as he departed, she drooped again, and it was but too manifest, that unless some fortunate accident should occur, such as might authorize their speedy union, poor Julia would not survive to fulfil her engagement.

Just at this time, when Abraham, having attained the canonical age, was preparing to

enter the sacred profession, his father was struck with a paralytic affection, from which he never recovered. The old man, after lingering a few weeks, died; and he died as he had lived; calm, contented, full of trust in the God who had guided him hitherto, and full of affection for his family and his people. The blow was deeply felt both by his wife and children; and it came upon them the more heavily, because now, for the first time, the sad effects of his liberal and unrestrained course of life appeared. He died absolutely pennyless. There was not in the house money sufficient to defray the expenses of the funeral; and the demand for dilapidations—that demand so little creditable to the Constitution of the Church of England—swept away the whole produce of the sale of furniture and effects, which necessarily ensued. With his usual consideration for others, and disregard for himself, Mr. Williams had made no charge upon the widow of his predecessor in the Rectory; but he was succeeded by a man widely different from himself in all respects—by a fellow of a school not yet, I

fear, wholly abolished, and which is not likely to be abolished till human nature undergo a change. The new incumbent, though a bachelor, and though determined to continue a bachelor to the day of his death, entertained no thought of being merciful to the widow and the orphan. He caused the house, the barns, the stables, the chancel, and even the fences, and stumps of fences, to be accurately surveyed; and he exacted the full amount of the valuation from a family whose sole dependence was now upon the exertions of my friend.

When the bitterness of grief for the loss of a kind parent began to subside, it was not possible for Abraham to hinder the reflection from arising, that now a greater bar than ever was thrown in the way of that marriage, in the completion of which all his hopes of earthly comfort were centred. His mother and sister must be maintained. This was a duty, of the paramount importance of which his mind was far too properly regulated not to be fully convinced; but let him not be deemed selfish, if something like sor-

row would occasionally mingle with his feeling of gratitude towards that Providence, which had happily supplied him with the means of discharging it. Alas! we are not always made happy—at least perfectly happy—by the conviction that we are doing, or striving to do, our duty. Ours is not the nature of angels, but of men; of creatures partaking as much of the dross of the earth as of the essence of the Divinity; and till that dross be wholly purged away, something of imperfection must cling even to our best resolutions and endeavours. Nevertheless, Abraham was too good a son, and too sincere a Christian, not to relinquish his own wishes freely, now that they came into collision with his duty; only he had not the courage to make Julia a partaker in his sorrows and in his apprehensions.

But it is not possible, at least during the season of youth, absolutely to divest ourselves of hope.

"I will work harder than I have yet done," said he to himself. "I will strive for the place of tutor at my College; or I will ob-

tain a curacy in the country, and take private pupils into my house; and whatever my savings may be, I will settle all upon my mother and sister, so that when a living falls, I may share it with Julia."

It is very probable that he might have succeeded in the first of these schemes, had he attempted it; for his talents were well known and duly appreciated in the University; but then where could his mother and sister reside? That plan, therefore, was abandoned; and he accordingly set himself with all diligence to carry into execution the other alternative, to which nothing but an overwhelming sense of duty could have driven him.

CHAPTER II.

THE PASTOR.

THE curacy which my friend Williams obtained, was that of St. Alphage, of the localities of which a slight sketch has already been given. It was retired, and therefore it suited the state of his finances; for the stipend allowed was only forty pounds a-year, and the emoluments of his fellowship amounted to an additional eighty. His was one of the poorer fellowships of Jesus. Had he resided, it might, perhaps, have brought in an hundred pounds annually; but the value of such things is always diminished by non-residence. With a yearly income, therefore, amounting to one hundred and twenty pounds, Abraham prepared himself to nurse his aged mother, to protect his sister, and to discharge the unos-

tentatious, but useful and often irksome, functions of a country curate.

St. Alphage was far removed from the sweet Vale of Abberquate, in North Wales, where Julia continued to reside, and where his own youth had been spent. He had selected Kent as a part of the empire in which, from its proximity to London, his chances of obtaining pupils were the best; and being a stranger to the country, he naturally accepted the first offer that was made of a cure and of a residence. Perhaps, too, he was fearful that a constant lingering near the object of his devoted affections might induce him to deviate from the rugged path which he had prudently determined to follow. He knew that Julia was all excellence and purity; that she would not tempt him to a premature union, or willingly consent to any step which would compromise the happiness or comfort of his mother. All this he knew well; but he knew also that she doated upon him with woman's fondness; and he dared not leave it in his own power to propose at any moment a measure so rash as that which inclination was con-

stantly suggesting. He distrusted not Julia, but himself; and to place it beyond his own reach to act otherwise than as he had wisely resolved to act, he abandoned scenes rendered dear to him by the recollections of his childhood, and by the presence of the only human being in whose society life was truly valuable.

I have said that between Abraham and myself a constant epistolary communication was kept up from the day of our departure from the University till the commencement of his last illness. Many of his letters are in my possession; and as I cannot but think that a more correct idea of a man's character and feelings is to be obtained by perusing his unrestrained correspondence with a friend than by any other means, I will here transcribe a few passages from one or two of the epistles which I received from him after his settlement in Kent. The letters are for the most part entirely devoted to the discussion of topics in which the writer himself was, as may be supposed, deeply interested. But these are subjects which might not equally interest the public, were they detailed at length;

and hence I will offer only a few short specimens of the general style in which they are written.

"I like my situation," says he, in one of them, "as much as any man can like a place which is new to him, and which has no natural claim upon his regard, by being the residence of persons whom he loves. The people appear to be, in general, very ignorant, but very civil; they are all of the lower orders, or of a class in society just removed from the lowest, and they seem well-disposed to treat with kindness and respect the person who is to propagate God's word amongst them. The only thing, indeed, which I do not entirely relish, is the order of my duties. I feel the responsibility imposed upon me as something far more awful than I ought to have undertaken; and when I remember that I must shortly add to it the care of private pupils, I confess that I am sometimes inclined to regret having embarked in a profession so arduous and so poorly remunerated.

"But this is wrong. I thank God that there is a home under my roof provided for my

mother and sister. I thank God, too, that my gentle Julia continues faithful to me, in spite of the little prospect which is before us of coming speedily together. Ah, my friend, if you knew that girl as I know her, you would not wonder that she thus engrosses so many of my thoughts; ay, that she sometimes comes between me and my Maker:—so good, so pure, so sensible; who would account any labour too severe, which promised to secure her as its final reward?"

Some time after the receipt of this letter, I heard of his having succeeded in obtaining a couple of pupils, and I naturally wrote to inquire how he relished his new employment. I give his answer to that question at length, as a just reproof to such as consider a private tutor amply remunerated, provided he receive his two hundred, or two hundred and fifty pounds per annum with each pupil.

"The only consideration at all capable of reconciling me to the task which I have undertaken, is the prospect which it holds out of providing for my mother and my sister, and ultimately for Julia. Trust me, my friend, that he who has never acted the part of a pri-

vate tutor knows not, and cannot know, one-twentieth part of the annoyances and inconveniences to which that occupation gives birth. In the first place, you are necessarily ignorant of the kind of characters which you are about to receive into your family. If there be nothing notoriously bad against a young man, you must accept him, otherwise you are called fastidious, and no more offers are made to you. And granting that you are fortunate, —granting that your pupils are all youths of correct conduct and proper feeling, from the moment they cross your threshold, your home is no longer your own. You live, as it were, continually in a public thoroughfare; even during meal-times you cannot converse with your nearest relatives, except on common-place topics; you never walk abroad when your pupils are within, nor remain within when they walk abroad, with an easy mind.

"With respect to the mere labour of tuition, that, no doubt, is wearisome enough. It is but an uninteresting occupation to go continually through the pages of Aristotle and Livy, or even to point out the beauties of Pindar and

Horace; but that might be endured. It is the breaking up of all family comfort,—the utter annihilation of home,—the constant restraint imposed upon your conduct, your words, and your very thoughts: these are the circumstances which to me, at least, are most grievous, in the duties of tutorizing. Then, again, there are the thousand chances that young men of seventeen and eighteen years of age will involve themselves in scrapes; not, perhaps, discreditable in the eyes of the fashionable world, but exceedingly hurtful to the morals of a country parish, and to the influence of him who is placed at its head. And above all, there is the necessity of humouring, as far as they can be humoured, the dispositions and propensities of your inmates. You cannot treat youths of these years as you would treat children; neither are they quite fit to be treated as men. You can neither reason with them altogether, for to mere reason they will pay no heed; nor can you employ coercive measures, for to such they will hardly submit. Rest assured that the daily labourer in the fields, who returns when his work is done to his own fire-side, and to the

bosom of his own family, leads a far happier life than your private tutor who is largely paid for receiving strangers into his house."

In spite of his dislike to the employment, Williams continued, however, to labour in his vocation as a private tutor for upwards of three years. To his parish he was, as may be supposed, most attentive all the while; and he never murmured at his lot, let happen what might, because the approbation of his own mind, and the affectionate letters which he regularly received from Julia, more than compensated for all his daily and hourly grievances. Nor did the contemplation of a mother and sister, made happy through his exertions, fail to increase that holy calm which was upon him. Perhaps he was never more happy than during these years; he certainly never enjoyed so much happiness after they departed.

From the period of his father's death, up to the expiration of the time specified, Abraham had visited his native vale only once. That visit occurred about twelve months after his removal into Kent. It was a short but a delightful one, because it was spent under the

roof of Mrs. Evans, and in a constant and unrestrained intercourse with Julia. If any thing, indeed, could be said to embitter it, it was the extreme delicacy of the maiden's health, who exhibited even then symptoms of that fatal disease, which in two years after brought her to an untimely grave. Abraham could not but observe the change in her appearance. Her form was wasted to a shadow; her cheek was sunken and hollow, and alternately pale and ruddy, as the fever went and came. But she laughed at his expressions of alarm; and he returned home, if not quite at ease, at least determined to believe her own assertion, that love was her only malady, and that love never yet caused death so long as it was not slighted.

In perfect accordance with her words were all Julia's letters during the entire space of eighteen months which followed their last parting. At the end of that time, however, her style became somewhat more gloomy. She spoke of the worthlessness of earthly enjoyments, and of the wisdom and necessity of her lover's fixing more of his affections upon Heaven, and less upon her. She tålked of her utter

inability to fulfil the expectations which he had formed, or to render him happy, who was far too good for her or for any woman living. To this topic, indeed, she recurred so repeatedly, that Abraham became seriously alarmed, and at last urged her to satisfy his fears by stating the true cause of those expressions, which, instead of comforting, tormented him with a thousand apprehensions too horrible to be named. He had not seen her for nearly two years, when the above letter was written. In due course of post an answer arrived, of which I subjoin a copy.

"I will not blame you, dearest Abraham, for the impatience in which your last appears to have been written; far less will I insult you, by supposing that you could seriously suspect your Julia of inconstancy or fickleness. Oh, no—no! God is my witness, that you are the subject, and the only subject, of my thoughts by day, and of my dreams by night. I fear, indeed, that I think of you too much; I am sure that I think of you far more than I think of my religion, or of my God. But He knows how frail and weak we are; and I pray that He will forgive me, if indeed there be any sin in

suffering the mind to dwell continually upon the most perfect of his creatures. Enough, however, of this. You beg of me to be explicit, and I will be so, though I had determined to defer my communication a little longer, and to spare you the pain which I fear it will occasion, till things had assumed a more decided aspect.

"Be not alarmed, my beloved Abraham, when I inform you, that my health has not of late been so robust as usual; and that my medical attendants have assured me, that there is some risk that I shall not recover. I say, be not alarmed—perhaps I ought rather to have said—be not wholly cast down. If it be the will of God to remove me, your image will be the last that shall fade from my memory; and I will only go before, to prepare a place for you in a world where, when we meet again, nothing can part us. But I cannot myself believe that it will end in this. True, I am ill, very ill; I have not indeed quitted my bed for these ten days past; but I am not yet willing to die, because I am not yet willing to be separated from you. Nevertheless, come to me if you can. Your pre-

sence will, I think, be worth all the medicines which they force upon me; and which, to please my mother, I am reluctantly compelled to take. God bless you, dearest friend! prays your own affectionate Julia."

Immediately on the receipt of this distressing intelligence, Abraham set off, by the most ready conveyance, to the Vale of Abberquate.—Of the circumstances which attended and ensued upon that journey, he has himself drawn so vivid a picture, that I readily avail myself of it, in laying the detail before the reader. The following is the substance of a long letter which he forwarded to me, several months after his return into Kent:—

"The bitterness of death is past. She for whom alone I desired to live, for whose sake labour was easy, and anxiety light, whose angel form, when it crossed my mind's eye, came ever as a minister of peace, and the teacher of holy things; that gentle being, who was indeed too good for earth, has departed to her Father which is in Heaven, and left me not a ray of hope to guide me along the way which it behoves me to travel. Julia is dead, and I

am alive to tell it. There was a time when the bare idea of such an occurrence froze the very blood in my veins, and I deemed it utterly impracticable to survive her; but I have survived, though for what purpose, or to what good end, can be known only to Him who sees into futurity. Yet, that it is for some good end, I have faith enough, in the midst of my sufferings, to believe; nay, I am already striving to submit without repining to the dispensations of that Power whose will it is thus to try me.

"You will be better able to imagine, than I am to describe, the state of mind in which my last journey from this place to Wales was performed. It appeared to me that I should never reach my native valley; and when at length the old church tower became visible in the distance, the horses which dragged our vehicle seemed to relax even their former tardy speed. Yet, strange to say, when the coach stopped, my strength absolutely failed me; I could hardly alight; and when I did, I was obliged to lean for a moment or two, against the sign-post of the inn, before I recovered vigour enough to walk on towards Mrs. Evans's cottage.

"Once in motion, however, and I could not move too quickly—I was soon beside the little wicket which opens into the garden, and within view of the paling on the right hand, where Julia first pledged to me her love. I could hear, likewise, the waters of the stream bubbling and brawling as they did on that sweet evening; and the sound brought back a thousand tender recollections, which flitted across my mind during the instant that elapsed whilst I was hurrying up the pathway towards the door. I observed then, that the window-curtains in Julia's room were drawn; and my heart beat almost to suffocation, as I strove, at first in vain, to raise the latch. But I did raise it, and was met by Mrs. Evans, who fell sobbing and weeping into my arms. 'How is Julia?' cried I; 'for the love of Heaven speak, and tell me that she is better!' The poor woman was about to reply, probably to intreat me to be cautious, when a shriek from the apartment of the invalid told us that my exclamation had been overheard. I flew towards the stairs, and ascended them in a state of insanity. I heard my name murmured in Julia's voice; I burst open her door; she

was sitting up in bed with her arms extended; I rushed towards her; she fell upon my bosom, and again repeating my name, lay perfectly still. Oh! how can I proceed?—After holding her in my embrace for several seconds, I laid her gently back upon her pillow—she was a corpse. Her spirit fled at the instant of our meeting; and my name was on her lips when they ceased to move for ever.

"Of what followed this scene I have no recollection, till I found myself in bed in my own house, and my sister watching affectionately beside me. They say that many weeks have elapsed since Julia died, and was buried; that a violent fever confined me during a fortnight at Abberquate, and that when it departed, it left me a poor maniac. I believe these accounts to be correct, for my limbs are wasted to nothing, and my cheek is as pale and hollow as was that of Julia when last I beheld her. If it be so, I can only thank God that He has restored to me my reason. Of my health, too, I must strive to be careful, for the sake of those whose dependence is upon me. But of ambition not a shadow remains. My pupils are

dismissed—I no longer desire preferment—why should I, for who is there to share it? For the support of my mother and sister, this curacy, with the profits of my fellowship, will amply suffice; and as Mrs. Evans has taken up her abode amongst us, the addition of her pittance will place us all in affluence. Such are my plans for the future, until it shall please God to remove me whither Julia has gone before."

Mr. Williams survived the date of the preceding letter upwards of twelve years. During the whole of that time he steadily adhered to the plans which he had laid down for himself, and was never known to utter one sentence of complaint against fortune, or rather against Providence. Of Julia, too, he neither spoke nor wrote, except occasionally to myself, when I have from time to time visited his cottage; but he wore a lock of her fair hair in his bosom, and carried it with him to the grave. To his parochial duties he became more and more attentive every day. His chief amusement was gardening; and to diversify that, he was in the habit of noting down all such events as

appeared worthy of record within the circle of his little district. Thus were his sorrows sanctified to him, and he died at last, composed and happy; having previously committed to the dust both his mother and mother-in-law. Of his sister it is needless to take farther notice, than that she is the mother of my children, and that nothing gave my poor friend so much comfort on his death-bed, as the knowledge that she was provided for. Peace to his ashes!

CHAPTER III.

THE POACHER.

IN a distant part of the parish, in one of its wildest and uncultivated regions, stands a solitary cottage, which, not more from the absolute dreariness of its location, than from the melancholy aspect of its architecture, can hardly fail to attract the notice of any wanderer who may chance to pass that way. It stands all alone upon a desolate moor There are not even the varieties occasioned by hill and dale, to give to the thing the least of a romantic appearance; but, as far as the eye can reach, all is one flat, dreary common, so perfectly bare of pasture that the very sheep seem to shun it, whilst one or two old withered firs give evidence that man has, at some period or other,

endeavoured to turn it to use, but has abandoned the attempt, because he found it fruitless.

Almost in the centre of this moor stands the cottage above alluded to. Its walls, constructed partly of brick, partly of deals, give free passage to every blast, let it blow from what quarter it may; and its roof, originally tiled, is now covered over, where it is covered at all, in some parts by patches of miserable thatch, in others by boards nailed on by an unskilful hand to the rafters. The cottage is two stories high, and presents five windows, besides a door on each side of it. The windows, as may be guessed, retain but few fragments of glass within the frames, the deficiency being supplied by old hats, rags, jackets, and rabbit-skins: whilst of the doors, the front or main one hangs by a single hinge, and that behind is fastened to the sinister lintel by no fewer than five latches made of leather.

Of the grounds by which it is begirt, a few words will suffice to convey an adequate idea. In setting out from the Vicarage, he who wishes to reach that cottage had better make, in the first place, for the high-road. Having traversed

that for a while he will observe a narrow foot-path on the left hand, which, after descending to the bottom of a glen, and rising again to the summit of a green hill, will bring him within view of the desolate tract already noticed, and will conduct him safely, for in truth there is no pass besides itself across the wild, to the hovel in question. There it ends. It stretches nowhere beyond; indeed, it has evidently been formed by the tread of the tenants of that lonely habitation, as they have gone to or returned from church and market; and the scantiness of the soil has doubtless given a facility to its formation; for, in truth, were any human being to walk twenty times backwards and forwards over any given spot in the moor, he would leave a trace of his journey behind him, which whole summers and winters would hardly suffice to obliterate.

Whilst the front door of the cottage opens at once upon the heath, a couple of roods of garden-ground, surrounded by a broken gorse hedge in the rear, give proof of the industry or idleness of its tenants. Through the middle of this plot runs a straight walk, ending at a

style, or immovable gate, erected in the lower fence. The articles produced are such only, on each side of that walk, as require little or no soil to bring them to perfection. A bed of potatoes, some rows of cabbages and savoys, two apple-trees, a damson and a bullace, half a dozen gooseberry-bushes, with twice as many of red-currant, constitute the sum total of the crop ever reared upon it. To make such a soil produce even these, must, I apprehend, have acquired some labour; and I will do its inhabitants the justice to observe, that overgrown as it is now with nettles and rank weeds, there was a time when labour was not spared upon it.

In this miserable hovel dwelt, for many years previous to my arrival in the parish, Old Simon Lee, the most skilful and the most determined poacher in all the country. He was the father of five children, the eldest of whom, when I first became acquainted with him, had attained his twenty-third year, whilst the youngest was just beginning to run alone, being as yet afraid to trust itself beyond arms-length from the chairs or tables, or any other substance of which it could lay hold. Simon himself was turned

of sixty. He was a short man, measuring not more than five feet five inches from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. His make was spare, but bony and muscular; his face, seamed as it was by exposure to weather, had, on the whole, a good expression, and there was a great deal more of intelligence in his keen black eye, than you will often observe in the eye of an English peasant. Simon's ordinary dress, when he went abroad, was a short brown gaberdine, which reached barely to his knees, a pair of fustian trowsers, hobnailed shoes, and thick worsted stockings. His hat was made of straw, and manufactured by his own hands, and you never failed to observe a piece of black tape or ribbon bound round it, just above the brim. Simon was, or rather would have been, but for his determined predilection in favour of the primitive employment of the chase, one of the best and most trust-worthy labourers in the parish. Set him to what you would, he never failed to do you justice. I have had him, again and again, to dig in my garden, and have compared his diligence with that of other men who bore a fairer

character; and I must do Simon the justice to say, that he has invariably worked harder for his day's pay than any individual among them. In the matter of honesty, again, you might trust him with untold gold. Much as he was disliked, and I know no character in a country place more universally disliked than a poacher, not a human being laid a theft or robbery to his charge; indeed, he was so well thought of in that respect, that it was no uncommon circumstance for the persons who blamed him most severely, to hire him, when occasion required, to watch their orchards or hop-poles; for Simon was well known to fear neither man nor devil. He really and truly was one of the few persons, among the lower orders, whom chance has thrown in my way, whose propensity for poaching I should be disposed to pronounce innate, or a thing of principle.

As a proof of this, I need only mention that Simon and I have discussed the subject repeatedly, and that he has argued in favour of his occupation as stoutly and openly as if there had been no law in existence against it. "Why, you know it is illegal," I would say,

"and you must likewise know that it is little better than stealing. What right have you to take the hares or partridges which belong to another man?"—"Lord bless you, Sir!" was Simon's invariable reply, "if you will only tell me to whom they belong, I promise you never to kill another while I live."—"They belong," said I, "to those upon whose lands they feed. Would you consider it right to take one of Sir Harry Oxenden's sheep or turkeys? Why then will you take his hares or his pheasants?"—"As to the matter of that," replied Simon, "there is a mighty difference between sheep and hares. Sheep are bought for money, they remain always upon one spot, they bear the owner's mark, they are articles of barter and sale," (I profess not to give my friend's exact words, only the substance of his argument,) "and they have always been such. But the hare which is found on Sir Harry's grounds to-day, may be found on Squire Deeds's to-morrow. and mayhap Sir Edward Knatchbull's the day after; now, to which of these three gentlemen can the hare be said to belong? No, Sir! God made the wild beasts of the field and the

fowls of the air for the poor man as well as for the rich. I will never so far forget myself as to plunder any man's hen-roost, or take away his cattle; but as long as these old arms can wield a gun, and these old hands can set a snare, I will never be without a hare or a pheasant, if I happen to want it." There was no arguing against a man who would talk thus; so after combating the point with him for a time, I finally gave it up.

The worst of it was, however, that Simon not only poached himself, but he brought up his son to the same occupation. The Lees were notorious throughout the country. Not a gamekeeper round but knew them; nor was there one who did not in some degree stand in awe of them. It was suspected too, that they had good friends somewhere behind the curtain; for though the patriarch had been convicted several times, he always managed to pay the fine, and, except once, had never suffered imprisonment.

I deem it no part of a country clergyman's duty to quarrel with one of his parishioners because he happens to set the game-laws at defiance. Per-

haps of all the laws that exist, they are in themselves the least defensible; and they lead to consequences often more serious than their warmest advocate would willingly anticipate. But with the justice or injustice, the policy or impolicy of these laws, I have no concern; there they are upon the statute-book, and, like all other laws, they ought to be observed. Still I repeat, that a clergyman has no business to quarrel with a poor man who transgresses in this point, and in none besides. For my own share, though I never told Simon as much, I could not but feel a kind of respect for him, such as I never felt for any other of the fraternity, because he not only deemed it unnecessary to deny his poaching, but defended it. I love to see men act upon principle, even when the rectitude of the proceedings may be questionable.

I have said that Simon Lee was no favourite among his neighbours, and the only cause which I have as yet assigned for the fact is, that he was a poacher. Doubtless this had its weight. But the love of poaching was, unfortunately for himself, not the only disagreeable humour with

which he was afflicted. There exists not within the compass of the four seas, a prouder spirit than that which animated the form of Simon Lee. He never would accept a favour from any man; he would not crouch or bend to the highest lord in the land. Yet Simon was no jacobin; quite the reverse. His was the genuine stubbornness, the hardy independence, which once rendered an English peasant more truly noble than the titled slave of France or Germany, but which, unfortunately, has of late years yielded to the fashionable agricultural system, and to the ruinous and demoralizing operations of the poor laws. Simon was the son of a man who had inherited a farm of some thirty or forty acres from a long line of ancestors; who loved his landlord, as the clansmen of the Highlands were accustomed to love their chief; and who prided himself in bringing up his children so as that they should earn their bread in an honest way, and be beholden to no human being. Simon, being the eldest of the family, succeeded, on the death of his father, to the farm. But he had hardly taken possession, when the rage for large farms.began to show it-

self; and in a few years after he was sent adrift, in order that his fields might be added to those of a wealthy tenant, who undertook to cultivate them better, and pay some two shillings per acre more to the landlord. Whether the new tenant kept his promise in the first of these stipulations, may be doubted. In the last he was very punctual, and in a short time he rode as good a horse, and kept as good a table, as his landlord himself.

It was a severe wound to Simon's proud heart, his expulsion from his paternal roof. "In that house, Sir," said he to me one day when we talked of the circumstance, "in that house I drew my first breath, and I hoped to draw my last. For two hundred and fifty years have the Lees inhabited it; and I will venture to say, that his honour has not upon all his lands a family who pay their rent more punctually than we did, or one more ready to serve him, either by day or night. Well, well, the landlord cares nothing for the tenant now, nor the tenant for the landlord; it was not so when I was a boy."

I have been told by those who remember his

dismissal, that Simon seemed for a time, after leaving his little farm, like one who had lost every thing that was dear to him. To hire another was impossible, for small farms were not to be had; and had the contrary been the case, it was more than questioned whether he could have brought himself to bestow the labour of a good tenant upon any besides the fields which he persisted in calling his own. Under these circumstances he took the cottage on the moor, as much, it was said, because it stood far from neighbours, as on any other account; and there he remained in a state of perfect idleness, till his little stock of money was expended, and he felt that he must either work or starve.

Simon had married before the inheritance came to him; his eldest boy was able to run about when he left it. His fifth was weaned, when at length, the proceeds of the sale being exhausted, and all the little capital swallowed up, he found himself under the necessity of looking out for a master. I have always been at a loss to conceive why he should have applied to the very man who displaced him, in preference to any of the other parishioners; but

so it was. He requested, and obtained permission to cultivate as a hind, at daily wages, those very fallows which he and his ancestors had so long tilled for their own profit; and from every account, no man could be more faithfully served than his employer, nor any lands more skilfully managed than those which he ploughed. Was this the affection of a rude mind to inanimate objects? or what was it?

Time passed, and Simon's family increased upon him, year after year. Still he laboured on; and though his wages were not, perhaps, competent to support a wife and eight children in comfort, (for there were originally eight of them,) still they made their wants square with their means, and so kept above the world. But there is no struggling against sickness. It pleased God to visit him with a malignant fever, of which every individual, from the father and mother, down to the infant at the breast, partook, and from which three out of the number never recovered. Alas! the rich man knows not what the poor man suffers, when disease takes up its abode in his dwelling. It it bad enough if his children be

attacked; bad, very bad, because even then there is the doctor's bill to pay, and the little comforts to procure which the doctor may recommend as necessary to their recovery; but when he himself falls a victim to the infection, when the arm upon which all depend is unnerved by sickness, and the limbs which ought to provide food for half-a-dozen hungry mouths, are chained down to a wretched pallet —God forgive the rich man who knows of this, and leaves a family so situated to its fate! Such, however, was the case with Simon Lee and his household. For a full fortnight he was himself confined to bed. His wife caught the infection from him, and communicated it to the children. The little money which they had in the house was soon exhausted; they lived for a while on the produce of their garden; but at length nature rebelled, and Simon, after many a struggle, had recourse to the parish. I shall give the particulars of this application as they were communicated to me by one of the committee.

"We were sitting," said my informant, "as usual, on a Thursday evening, in the room al-

lotted to us in the Workhouse. We had had a good many applications, for the typhus was prevalent at the time, and we had relieved several, when, on ringing the bell to see whether any more were waiting, to the astonishment of all present, in walked Simon Lee. At first we hardly knew him, he was so wasted and so altered. But he looked at us with the same keen glance with which he used to regard us when he was one of our number, and stood leaning upon his stick in silence. Our overseer at that time was Farmer Scratch—a man, as you know, Sir, not remarkable for his kindness of heart, or liberality of disposition.

" 'What want you, Simon ?' said he, 'surely you cannot be in need of relief ?'—'I am in need, though,' said Simon ; 'I would not have come here, were not my family starving.' 'We have no relief to give you,' answered the overseer ; 'you ought to have taken better care of your money when you had it. I wonder you are not ashamed to come here like a common pauper, you that used to grant relief, and not to ask it.' Simon's blood rushed to his cheeks as the overseer spoke. He raised

himself erect upon his staff, and looking proudly at us, he turned upon his heel and walked away. 'This is the first time I have asked alms,' cried he, as he opened the door, 'and it shall be the last.' Simon has had sickness in his family repeatedly since that time. I have known him to be a full fortnight without work, yet he has never come to the parish since."

I was a good deal struck and affected by this story, so I took the first opportunity that offered of discussing the subject of it with Simon himself. "It is all quite true, Sir," said he. "The overseer was harsh, and I was proud, so we parted."—"And how have you done since?" asked I. "Why, bad enough sometimes," was the reply; "but poor folks, you know, Sir, cannot be nice. And I will tell you. It never entered into my head till I was on my way home from the committee, that to be in want of food, whilst the hares were eating my cabbages every night, and the partridges feeding not a rood from my door, was no very wise act. I poached, as you call it, to feed my children. I have never killed game for any other purpose; and whilst there is a head of it left, and I am

able to catch it, they shall not be beholden to the parish for a meal."

I cannot help thinking that the history of Simon Lee, as far as it has yet been detailed, contains a lesson well worth the attention both of country gentlemen and farmers. Whilst the old system of land-letting continued, and every thirty or forty acres of ground supported an honest family, it is very probable that the landlord received a less sum in the shape of gross yearly rent, and that the yeomanry rode poorer horses, and kept poorer tables, than they do at present. But it is equally certain that the paupers to be relieved by their parishes then, came not up to one-fiftieth part of those which are continually seeking and obtaining parochial relief now; and if the increased burthen thereby imposed upon the land be taken into account, it will probably be found that agriculturists are not such decided gainers by the change as most of them imagine. Besides all which, it must be manifest to all who have eyes to look round them, and minds to comprehend what they see, that with the race of petty farmers has expired one of the finest and most virtuous classes of

society. Their houses were the nurseries of good and faithful servants; they were themselves hospitable to the utmost extent of their means, and almost always honest. They were really, I say not upon principle, but certainly upon honourable prejudice, attached to the constitution in church and state. If, then, the country have suffered in its moral character by their annihilation, he must be a very short-sighted politician indeed who imagines that the injury thereby inflicted upon society can be at all compensated by any improvement in the art of agriculture, or increase of the amount of produce raised from the soil.

CHAPTER IV.

THE POACHER.

HAVING thus made my reader in some degree acquainted with Simon Lee and his family, I proceed at once to detail the circumstances which alone, when I took up the pen, I had intended to detail. Simon had been an inhabitant of his cottage on the moor upwards of twenty years before I came to the parish. The fits of sickness already hinted at had come and gone by long ago, and the habits consequent upon them were all entwined in his very nature, so as that nothing could remove them. In fact, Simon had ceased to be regarded by any of his neighbours with an eye of pity, for his misfortunes were all forgotten; whilst his poaching propensity continuing in full vigour, all men spoke of him with abhorrence.

One of the first acts of a country clergyman, after he has settled himself in the spot where his duties lie, is, at least ought to be, to call upon the whole of his parishioners, rich and poor, and to make himself acquainted, as well as he can, with their respective characters and circumstances. In prosecuting these inquiries, he is of course liable to be imposed upon, according as neighbours chance to live on good or bad terms with one another; for it very seldom happens, I am sorry to say, that the poorer classes speak of their acquaintances, except from the dictates of prejudice, either for or against them. Of course, every prudent man will hear all that is said, and remember it; but he will use it only as the mariner uses his log-book; he will take it as a guide in the mean while, but make large allowances for the possibility of being deceived. In the case of Simon, I found this caution peculiarly necessary. To whomsoever I put a question respecting the inhabitant of the cottage on the moor, the answer was invariably the same:—"We know but little of him, Sir, for he neighbours with no one; but they say he is a desperate fellow."

By the farmers, again, I was told of his extreme insolence; whilst Sir Harry's gamekeeper, who attended my church, assured me, "that he was the most troublesome rascal in all the county." So, thought I, here is a pretty sort of a person with whom I am to come into contact. But I remembered the lesson given to me by my good father; and under the idea that he really was a very wretched character, I resolved to spare no labour to effect his reformation.

The first time I visited Simon was in the month of October. As I was anxious to see and converse with the man himself, I delayed my stroll till the sun had set, and the hours of labour were passed; then, fully anticipating a disagreeable interview, I sallied forth. Half an hour's walk brought me to his hovel. I confess that the external appearance of it by no means induced me to doubt the evil rumours communicated from so many quarters; but appearances, I recollected, were often deceitful, so I determined to suspend my judgment till better grounds should be given for forming it. I accordingly knocked at the door; a rough voice called to come in; I pushed it open, and

entered. Let me describe the *coup-d'œil*, as it then fell upon me.

Stepping over a sort of oaken ledge, perhaps three or four inches in height, I found myself in a large apartment, the floor of which was earthen, and full of inequalities. The apartment in question occupied the better part of the basement of the house; that is to say, it took in the whole of the lower story, except a scullery and coal-hole, partitioned off at one of the extremities by a few rotten boards. There was no want of light here; for though the better part of each window was stuffed, as I have already described, there being two casements, besides a door on one side, and a like number on the other, besides various fissures in the wall, the crevices capable of admitting the sun's rays were greatly more abundant than may usually be seen in the English poor man's dwelling. The room was low in the roof, in proportion to its size. The walls, originally whitewashed, were of a dingy brown; on the right hand, as you entered, was the fireplace—a huge orifice—in the centre of which stood a small rusty grate, having a few sticks burning

in it, and a pot boiling above them. On one side of this grate, and within the cavity of the chimney, sat Simon. At his feet lay a lurcher, a spaniel, and two ragged black terriers; and he himself was busy twisting a wire, no doubt for some useful purpose. His wife (originally, I have been told, a pretty woman, but now a hard-favoured slatternly dame,) leaned over the pot, and was in the act of brushing off such particles of a handful of salt as adhered to her palm. Two children, one apparently about five, the other about seven years old, were rolling in the middle of the floor, in a state but few degrees removed from nudity; whilst a taller girl, whose age I should guess to be about thirteen, dandled an infant in her arms beside an opposite window.

Such was the general aspect of the room, and the disposition of the family, when I entered. With respect to furniture, I observed a small deal-table, four chairs, rush-bottomed once upon a time, but now greatly in need of repair, a stool or two, a little arm-chair, with a hole in its seat, and a long bench or form. But there were other implements to be seen more at-

tractive than these. On the beam which ran through the middle of the ceiling, was suspended a long fowling-piece; there were cranks near it for two others, but at present they were empty. A game-bag, dyed all sorts of colours with blood and grease, hung upon a nail in the wall opposite to me: beside it were two flew-nets, such as fishermen use when they drag drains or narrow streams; and a third, of longer dimensions, fit for use in a pond or lake, was thrown across the boarding which separated the apartment from the coal-hole. Three or four shot-belts dangled over the fire-place; whilst several pairs of strong mud-boots, leathern gaiters, hobnailed shoes, &c. &c., were scattered at random in the different corners of the room.

The dogs, whose growling had been sufficiently audible even previous to my knock upon the door, no sooner eyed me, than with one accord they sprang to their legs, barking angrily, and showed every tooth in their heads, as if prepared to pounce upon me. They were, however, in admirable training. Simon had only to raise his finger, giving at the same time

a low whistle, when they dropped down as if they had been shot, and remained belly to the ground, without moving limb or tail, during the whole of my visit. I could not but pity the unfortunate country gentleman, into whose preserves these dogs, with their master, should make their way.

It was easy to discover, from the demeanour of all present, that Simon had been little accustomed to receive visits from the minister of his parish. Both he and his wife appeared utterly confounded at the vision which now stood before them. The wire which he had been twisting was hastily dropped; he rose from his seat, and uncovering his head, stood staring as if he had seen a spirit. In like manner, the housewife seemed rooted to the spot which she occupied when I raised the latch; and the noise of the very children ceased, as if by magic. I had actually advanced as far as the chimney-corner before my parishioner recovered himself, or found tongue enough to request that I would be seated.

It was not long, however, before Simon and I found ourselves mutually at ease, and the

prejudices under which I laboured respecting him began to give way. He was civil, without meanness; respectful, without exhibiting the most remote approximation to cringing; and honestly, yet manfully, professed to be flattered by the marks of attention which I paid him.

"You are the first minister that ever darkened these doors," said he; "and the only gentleman that has condescended to notice old Simon Lee, since he became poor and friendless. I am glad to see you, Sir. I liked your discourse last Sunday much; but, thank God, want nothing from you except your good-will."

"And that you shall have, my friend," replied I: "but they tell me, Simon, that you do not lead exactly the sort of life that you ought to lead. How comes it, that men's tongues seem so free, when you are the subject of their talk?"

"Indeed, Sir," replied Simon, "that is more than I can tell. I know very well that I am no favourite here; and why? because I hate gossiping; because I fancy myself as

good as any of them; because I sometimes speak my mind, and will not always run into the mud when a farmer or his horse chances to be in the middle of the way. But judge for yourself, Sir. Try me, and if you find me a thief or a rogue, then turn your back upon me."

"But you are a poacher, Simon; and poaching, you know, is against the laws of your country."

"So it is, Sir," was the reply, "and I am very sorry for it: but is it against the law of the Bible? I have read that book through more than once, and I cannot see that a poor man is there forbidden to kill the creatures which God has made wild, and given up as a sort of common possession to all. I know man's laws are against me, and I have felt their severity before now; but I go by the law of my Maker, and as long as I do that, I care for no man."

"But God's laws are against you also. We must submit to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake; and to the game-laws among the rest."

"So I have been told," answered Simon; "yet the very persons who persecute me most severely for occasionally killing a hare or a pheasant, are continually violating the laws in matters quite as serious. Why, there is not a magistrate upon the bench against whom I could not *peach*, for purchasing India handkerchiefs for himself, and French gloves and stockings for his ladies. I do not blame them for that, not I; I see no reason why all these things should not be within the reach of every man who can afford to pay for them; only, I say, let them wash their own hands clean of breaking the laws of the land, before they are so severe upon a poor man like myself, if he catch a head of game now and then to fill his children's bellies. Besides, if they had left me to rear these young ones on my father's farm, they never would have found me cross them, let them do what they would."

The conversation being continued in this strain for some time, and no effect produced upon the poacher's sentiments, I gradually changed the subject, and led him to talk of

other things, such as I deemed most likely to betray him into a disclosure of his real character in the common occurrences of life. The result of the whole was, that I rose to quit his house, full rather of compassion than of any other feeling. I was conscious that he had in him, at least the elements of a good member of society; and if these were somewhat deranged by the preponderancy of an illegal habit, I could not, in my own mind, avoid blaming for it, not only the proprietor of his little farm, who had so rudely ejected him from his home, but the parishioners at large, who originally drove him to it by the needless severity of their manner, when want and sickness first urged him to apply for relief. I learned from him, that neither he nor his son had any regular employment.

"People are afraid of us," he said, "God knows why; and yet, Sir, there is not one among them who will deny, that both Joe and I do a good day's work when we can get it, and that we are always ready to undertake any job that may be offered."

I was at the time in want of some one to

assist me in laying out the grounds about the vicarage, and planting the church-yard; I engaged Simon on the moment, and I never had cause to repent of the measure during the whole time that he was in my service.

I have said, that Simon's eldest son had attained his twenty-third year at the period when our acquaintance commenced. He was a well-grown, powerful youth; not handsome, certainly, but straight, broad-shouldered, full-chested, and five feet ten inches high without his shoes. It was not often that Joe Lee mixed in the sports of the village youths; for, brought up as he had been, he was shy, or, as the neighbours called it, proud, like his father; but, when he did join their meetings, there was not a lad among them all that could heave the bar, bowl, bat, or run against him. In wrestling, too, he was unrivalled; and as to shooting, when Shrove Tuesday came round, Joe saved many a devoted dunghill cock, by challenging his companions to shoot at penny-pieces, or small shingle stones thrown into the air. Generally speaking, indeed, he never strove at any game without gaining the prize, for he was prudent enough

never to attempt any thing of which he had not some previous knowledge.

It chanced that, about a year and a half after the interview above recorded, the young men of the parish met, as their custom was, on a certain holiday, to play their match at cricket, and to try their skill in foot-ball, racing, and other athletic sports. To these meetings, by the way, I never failed to give my countenance. For the most part I stood by till one or two contests came to a close; and by thus proving to them that religion is no enemy to mirth, as long as it exceeds not the bounds of moderation, I have good reason to believe that I put a stop to many a drunken brawl. Such meetings, at least, I was assured, had invariably ended, during my predecessor's time, in riot and intemperance; in mine, I can safely say that the instances were rare indeed, in which the slightest deviation from strict sobriety and good fellowship occurred. As ill luck would have it, however, a violent quarrel arose this day between Joe Lee and another person; and as the quarrel ended not where it began, but led to very serious consequences, it may be

proper to state how it originated, and to what height it was immediately carried.

Our Squire had lately added to his establishment a new gamekeeper, a blustering, hot-headed native of Yorkshire. This person having been worsted in a variety of games, in which he appeared to consider himself an adept, finally challenged any man upon the common to shoot with him, for a wager, at a number of sparrows which he had brought in a cage for the purpose. The challenge was accepted by Joe. The number of birds to be let loose was a dozen a-side, and the parties were to take the alternate shots, whether they chanced to be fair or cross. Both men were noted as excellent marksmen: a great degree of interest was accordingly excited on the occasion; and though the majority of those present wished well to Joe Lee, simply because he was a man of Kent, and not a Yorkshireman, there were not wanting numbers who backed the keeper to the customary extent of a pint, or a quart of ale. The preparations for the match were soon made—the umpires took their stations; and a trap being formed at the distance of thirty paces

from the sportsmen, the sparrows were removed to it from the cage, one by one.

The first fire fell by lot to Joe, and it was successful,—he killed his bird. The keeper was equally fortunate when his turn arrived. Thus they went on, displaying an extraordinary precision of aim, till the fifth fire came round; Joe's took effect; the bird at which the north-countryman shot, flew off untouched. A shout was of course raised by Joe's backers; whilst those of his opponent were proportionably downcast. It soon happened, however, that the rivals were again on an equal footing; Joe missing, and the other killing. And now each had but a single charge reserved; each, too, had missed but once, consequently, each could count ten dead sparrows for eleven shots. This fire must therefore decide the match. You might have heard a pin drop upon the very grass, when, the trap being raised, the little bird rose in air, and Joe, with one leg advanced somewhat before the other, followed it with his gun. He fired. The sparrow soared up for a moment, and dropped perfectly dead, just within distance. I looked at the gamekeeper

at this moment, and observed that his knees trembled; he was flurried beyond measure, and the consequence was, that the shot flew harmless, and the bird escaped. Instantly the shouts of the Kentish men rent the air, and I quitted them, having seen Joe, whose shyness and pride were both for the moment forgotten, elevated upon the shoulders of a couple of lusty youths, and commencing his triumphal march round the common. Perhaps it is to be regretted that I had not remained amongst them a little longer; had I done so, in all probability matters would not have taken the turn they did.

Chagrined and irritated at his defeat, the keeper mixed no more in the amusements of the day, but sitting down in a booth, swallowed large potations of ale and spirits, too often the resource of the uneducated classes against the pangs of disappointment or sorrow. As the liquor began to take effect, the man became quarrelsome. He accused Joe, who having successfully finished a foot-race, rested upon a bench near, of foul play. He insisted that the eleventh bird fell out of bounds, and being

corrected in that particular by a reference to his own umpire, he changed his mode of attack for another annoyance. The poaching propensity of Joe's father, his pride, and his poverty, were thrown in the son's teeth. Joe bore it, not without a struggle, but he did bear it. Encouraged, probably, by the calmness of his rival, the keeper next began to vent his spleen upon Joe's dog. One of the ragged terriers of which I have already spoken, belonged, it appeared, to Joe, and it seldom left his heel, let him go where he would. On the present occasion it lay beneath the form on which its master sat, perfectly quiet and inoffensive. "It is a d—d shame that such fellows as you should be allowed to keep dogs," said the surly keeper, giving at the same time a violent kick to the unoffending animal. "If I was master, I would have them all shot, and by G—d, the first time I see that brute self-hunting on our land, he shall have the contents of this piece in his stomach." Still Joe kept his temper, and parried the attack the best way he could: but his blood was boiling, and it only wanted a little more provocation to bring matters to an

issue. "Will you wrestle a fall, you ——?" cried the keeper, rising and throwing off his jacket. "With all my heart," exclaimed Joe; "and don't spare me, for, by the Lord, I don't mean to spare you." To it they went, and after a few severe tugs the keeper was thrown heavily. He rose with considerable difficulty, and complained grievously of his head, staggered, and fell again to the ground. Immediately some of the lads ran to his assistance: he was black in the face. They undid his neckcloth, threw water upon him, but all to no purpose; his limbs quivered convulsively, his eyes opened and shut once or twice, a gasp, a rattle in his throat, and he was a corpse! A quantity of blood gushing from his nose and mouth, gave evidence of some severe internal injury; whilst the only word uttered by himself, namely, "My head, my head!" seemed to imply, that a concussion of the brain had occasioned it. Let the injury, however, be where it might, it was a fatal one; for when the medical assistance arrived, which was promptly sent for, life was wholly extinct.

CHAPTER V.

THE POACHER.

As may readily be imagined, a termination so awful to sports, begun, and heretofore carried on in the best possible humour, produced no trifling sensation among those who witnessed it. The question most keenly agitated was, how were they to dispose of the unfortunate perpetrator of the deed? That he willingly killed his antagonist, not one among them supposed; but there is a propensity in human nature to regard the shedder of man's blood, whether by accident or design, with abhorrence, and who but a minute ago was a favourite with all the bystanders, became now an object of loathing to the majority. Whilst a few voices, therefore, called aloud to let the poor fellow go, hundreds were decidedly of opinion "in

he ought to be detained. As to Joe himself, he never attempted to escape. Whilst the fate of the fallen wrestler was in doubt, or rather as long as his hurts were considered in no degree to endanger his life, Joe kept aloof from him, and probably congratulated himself on the extent of the chastisement which he had inflicted; but when a cry was raised, "The keeper is dead!" there was not an individual in the throng who appeared more anxious to falsify the rumour, by bestowing upon its object every attention in his power. Dead, however, the keeper was, and Joe readily gave himself up to the parish constable, until the issue of the coroner's inquest should be ascertained.

Several hours of daylight still remaining, no time was lost in dispatching a messenger for the coroner; and as the office for this part of the county happened at the time to be filled by a Folkestone attorney, that gentleman speedily arrived. A jury was summoned, witnesses examined, and the body viewed on the spot where it had ceased to breathe. There ot be a doubt that a verdict of accidental

death would have been returned, but for the unfortunate speech delivered by Joe previous to the commencement of the match—"Do not spare me, for, by the Lord, I do not mean to spare you." This sounded very like malice prepense; and the fact, that the parties were at the moment in a state of hostility towards one another, furnished strong ground of suspicion that, if there existed no design on either side positively to take away life, still each was resolved to inflict upon the other as severe a bodily punishment as it was possible to inflict. "Under these circumstances, gentlemen," said the coroner, "I see not how we can suffer this matter to end here. You must return a verdict either of murder or man-slaughter, which you think proper. My own opinion is, that the latter will suit best with the state of the present affair." It is said that the coroner was the identical attorney who had conducted all the prosecutions hitherto carried on against the Lees. Whether his judgment was warped by prejudice, or whether he hoped to conciliate the good-will of the landed aristocracy by involving one member of a detested family in

trouble, or whether he acted, as charity would dictate, in accordance with his own sense of duty, I cannot tell. Certain it is, however, that a verdict was returned according to his recommendation, and, under the coroner's warrant, Joe Lee was removed to gaol.

It is needless to describe with minuteness the circumstances which attended the young man's imprisonment and trial. Neither is it necessary to observe that the misfortune in which their son was involved gave to Simon and his wife the deepest concern; more especially as they dreaded a degree of interference from certain high quarters, which they considered capable of carrying all before it, even to the conviction of an accused person, in defiance of the clearest evidence of his innocence. Simon and his wife, however, only fell, in this respect, into the double error which frequently possesses the minds of the lower orders in this country. They groundlessly imagined, first, that their betters would desire to pervert the course of justice, for the sake of furthering a selfish purpose—a crime of which some no doubt may be guilty, but from which the aris-

tocracy of England are, as a body, entirely free; and secondly, they erroneously conceived that wealth and rank are able to overwhelm innocence and poverty — a calamity from which our glorious constitution effectually guards us all. Had Joe Lee been arraigned before a bench of county magistrates, it is just possible that his general character might have told against him; but he was given over to be dealt with according to the judgment of twelve plain Englishmen, in whose eyes there really are some crimes more heinous than that of killing game without qualification, licence, or permission. Nor did the jury which tried his case disappoint my expectation. In spite of the formidable sentence which, in the view of the subject taken by the coroner, rendered a verdict of manslaughter inevitable, Joe Lee was fully acquitted; and he returned home, after a sojourn of a week or two at Maidstone, to follow his former occupations.

If the Lees had formerly been objects of general dislike, they now became so in a tenfold greater degree. The gamekeepers on all the neighbouring estates' entered into close alliance

with the tenantry, for the protection, as it was said, of their masters' property, but more justly, I believe, to revenge the death of their comrade. The farmers, again, resolved to give neither work nor relief to characters so desperate; and the very labouring classes shunned them, as if they had been polluted creatures, and a deadly infection rode upon their breaths. Simon and his family were not unaware of this. It had the effect, not of softening or reclaiming, but of rendering them more ruthless than ever; and it was now pretty generally understood, that both father and son were resolved to follow their vocation at all hazards; whilst strong, and even armed parties, were nightly abroad, for the purpose of intercepting them. It was in vain that I sought to reason with either party. The *world* would not give way to an individual; that individual would not give way to the world: indeed, I soon found that, by attempting to make things better, I only made them worse, and weakened my influence over each of the contending factions. Matters at length attained to such a crisis, that I anxiously desired to hear of Simon's capture

and conviction; for I had little doubt that the latter event would be followed by his banishment from the country; and I was quite sure, that nothing short of his removal would prevent some act of desperate violence from being sooner or later committed. A single month had barely elapsed from the return of Joe out of prison, when, on wandering to Simon's cottage one morning, with the view of making a last effort to reclaim him, I found that my worst fears had been realized.

Having knocked at the door several times without receiving any answer, I raised the latch, for the purpose of entering. Instead of the loud barking which usually gave notice of the watchfulness of Simon's four-footed companions, a sort of broken growl, something between the sound of a bark and a howl, alone caught my ear. It was accompanied with a wailing noise—the noise of a woman weeping; but, except from these noises, there was no intimation that the house was inhabited. I stepped in. There sat Simon in his old corner, with his head bent down, and arms crossed upon his bosom; of his dogs, only one was

near him, the identical black terrier which usually accompanied his son; and it lay upon the ground, with its tongue hanging out, and its limbs at full stretch, apparently in the agonies of death. Simon either did not, or would not, notice me. The wounded dog, however—for on a nearer inspection I saw a desperate wound in its flank—made an effort to raise its head, and repeated the melancholy growl which it had given when I first stepped across the threshold; but the head dropped again to the earth, and the sound ceased. Still Simon took no notice. I went up to him, placed my hand on his shoulder, and called him by his name; he looked up, and in my life I never beheld such expression in the human countenance. Agony, grief, rage, and despair, were all depicted there. His eyes were bloodshot, his cheeks pale as ashes; there was blood upon his garments, and his whole form was defiled with mud. Without apparently knowing what he was about, he sprang to his feet. In a moment the butt-end of a gun was brandished over me; and, had I not quickly stepped back, it would have dashed my skull to pieces. As it was, the

blow falling upon the unfortunate dog, put an end at once to its agonies.

"Simon," said I, "what means this? Why lift your hand against me?" The unhappy man stared at me for a moment; the savage expression gradually departed from his face, and, falling down again upon his seat, he burst into tears. I know no spectacle more harrowing than that of an old man when he is weeping. The grief must be deep-seated indeed, which wrings salt tears from the eyes of such a man as Simon Lee; and I accordingly trembled when I again requested to be made acquainted with the cause of behaviour so extraordinary, and so unlike that which I usually met at his hands.

"I thought you had been one of the blood-hounds, Sir," cried he; "I thought you had tracked us to our very home; but go up-stairs, go and you will see, for I cannot speak of it." I went up accordingly, and beheld, upon a miserable pallet, all that remained of the stoutest wrestler, the fleetest runner, and the best shot in the parish. His mother was standing near him, wringing her hands in pitiable agony;

his little brothers and sisters were clustered round him, and joining, some of them scarce knew why, in the lamentations of the parent. I was much affected. "How has this happened?" asked I, hardly able to articulate. "Oh, my boy! my boy!" exclaimed the unhappy mother, "my first-born, and the dearest of my children, has it come to this? Was it for this end that I reared you with so much care, that you should die by the hands of common murderers? Look here," cried she, at the same time rolling down the bed-clothes, "look what they have done." I did look, and beheld a wide wound upon the left breast of the corpse, as if a whole charge of slugs, or swan-shot, had entered. The left arm, too, I saw, was broken: it was a horrible spectacle. I covered it up again. It was plain enough that a rencontre had taken place, during the preceding night, between some of the keepers and Simon and his son; and that it had ended fatally, the proof was now before me. I could not, however, inquire into particulars just at that moment, for the parents were too much overcome by the

fate of their child to repeat them; but I learned them soon after. They were as follows:—

About ten o'clock on the preceding night, the moon being in her first quarter, Simon and his son, each armed with a fowling-piece, and attended by their dogs, set out, according to custom, in quest of game. As they had placed several snares in the woods of ——— in the course of the preceding morning, they directed their steps thither; not only because they were tolerably sure of filling their bag in a moderate space of time, but with the view of ascertaining whether or not the wires had availed them. The distance was considerable. They walked seven good miles before they reached their ground; consequently midnight was hard at hand when they began to penetrate the preserves. Their object being to obtain as many head of game, and with as little noise as possible, they had taken care to provide themselves with brimstone matches, for the purpose of smoking such pheasants as they might happen to see at roost upon the boughs. They had succeeded in bagging a brace without the ne-

cessity of firing, when the dogs starting a couple of hares, both father and son discharged their pieces almost at the same moment. All this occurred close to a particular corner of the wood where they had placed no fewer than three wires, at short distances from one another. No doubt the wires had been observed: and the keepers, rightly judging that those who set them would return at night to take away their spoil, laid themselves up in ambush in their immediate vicinity. The report of fire-arms drew them instantly to the spot; neither Simon nor Joe considered it at all derogatory to their dignity to escape, if they could; so, seeing three men advancing towards them, they took to their heels. The keepers followed. Joe might have escaped with ease; but his father, grown stiff by years, was unable to keep up with him. The pursuers gained upon him rapidly. "Run, Joe; run, my boy," cried the old man; "never mind me. Remember your mother and sisters; run, and take care of them." —"That I will not, father," answered Joe; "where you are, I am; let them come on." Old Simon was by this time pretty well spent

with running. He stopped to breathe: Joe stopped also. He endeavoured to load his gun, but had only time to ram home the powder, when the assailants came up. One of them made a blow at the old man's head with a bludgeon, which, had it taken effect, would have put him beyond the reach of surgical art; but Joe caught it ere it fell. His left arm received it, and was broken. Still the right remained to him, and with a single stroke from the butt of his gun, he laid the fellow flat upon the earth. A desperate struggle now ensued between the two remaining keepers and the poachers. Though powerless of one hand, Joe was still a match for most men; and Simon, having recovered his breath, fought as if only half the load of years had been upon his back. The keepers gave ground. The sole object of the Lees being escape, they abstained from pursuing them, and made the best of their way for the high road, and along it towards their home. But they were not permitted to go unmolested. The keepers followed. By way of checking their farther advance, Joe unfortunately turned round and levelled his piece. He had hardly

done so, when one of the pursuers fired, and his gun being loaded for the purpose with buck-shot, its contents made their way through the young man's clothing, and entered his chest. The wound was not, however, immediately fatal. "I am hurt, father," cried he; "fly, and leave me to my fate." Another shot was fired while he was yet speaking, which took effect upon the only dog that stuck to them. Wild with rage, old Simon would have loaded his gun, and revenged his son or perished, had not the latter assured him that he was still able to proceed. By darting down a deep ravine they managed to evade the keepers; and then taking the most unfrequented ways, they made for the moor. But just as the light in their cottage window became discernible, Joe's strength forsook him; he reeled and fell; nor was it without much waste of time, and almost superhuman exertions, that the old man contrived to drag, rather than carry him home. Poor Joe never spoke after. He was laid upon his bed in a state of stupor, and about half an hour before daybreak breathed his last.

Such is a brief relation of the events that

brought about the melancholy scene to which I was now a witness. From it I learned, that the blood upon Simon's gaberdine was his son's. The state of frantic sorrow, too, in which I found him, was sufficiently explained, as well as the impulse which drove him to raise a murderous arm against any intruder; and though it was impossible to acquit the old man of blame, though indeed I felt that the death of Joe was entirely owing to his lawless proceedings, I could not but pity him to a far greater degree than I condemned him. I did my best to comfort both him and the lad's mother; but my words fell upon inattentive ears, and I departed, much troubled in my own mind, and without having the consolation to reflect that I had in any degree lightened the troubles of others.

The affair, fatal as it was, never came before a court of justice. It was not, of course, to the interest of Simon, had he been capable of attending to his interests, to stir in the matter; for he could not bring his charge home to any definite person, and the very attempt so to do must have involved him in additional trouble. The fact, however, is, that Simon was never,

from the hour of his son's death, in a fit state to conduct any business, or even to take care of himself. His stubborn temper, if it could not bend, was at length broken. All his misfortunes, real and imaginary, seemed to press upon his mind with double violence, now that the child of his pride was taken away from him. I have myself seen him weep, at times, like a woman. Long after his wife had regained her composure, Simon was inconsolable; and the ravages made by sorrow upon his health and frame were many degrees more visible, and more serious, than those which three score and three winters had effected. Simon was an altered man. The gun and the net were laid aside, but the spade and the hoe took not their place. At first he was deemed lazy; the parish refused to assist him; he was cited before the magistrates, and committed to gaol. Having remained there till the period of his sentence expired, he was again set at liberty. But of his liberty he made no good use. His very wife now complained of him. He would sit, she said, for hours at a time, with folded arms, staring into the fire. He seldom spoke either to

her or her young ones; and when he did, it was incoherently and wildly. At length he was missing. He wandered forth one morning, unshod and bare-headed. In this plight he was seen to pass through the church-yard, resting for a minute or two on Joe's grave. But what became of him after no one can tell. He was never heard of again. By some it was surmised, that under the influence of a crazed brain, he had wandered into a distant part of the country; and hence that, sooner or later, tidings of him would certainly arrive. By others it was insinuated, that he must have either thrown himself from the cliffs into the sea, or fallen over and been destroyed. That the first report was groundless, an absence of five years, during which no intelligence of his destiny has reached his family, furnishes ample ground for belief; whether either of the latter surmises be correct, I am ignorant. All that I know is, that he has never been seen or heard of in these quarters since the morning above alluded to; and that his wife, and four surviving children, are now wholly supported from the poor's-rates.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SCHOOLMISTRESS.

About a gun-shot, or something less, from the south angle of the church-yard, stands a cottage, differing but little in its structure and general arrangement from other rustic habitations, and hence advancing no particular claims upon the notice of a stranger. It is a plain, unadorned, low building, constructed like most others in this district, partly of brick, partly of beams of timber, and roofed over with thatch. There is a small patch of garden, behind, cropped for the most part with potatoes; and one of the lanes or cross-roads which abound here, sweeps by its front.

In that dwelling resided for many years Dame Tapsal, one of those striking characters which occur but rarely in England; but

which, when they do occur, make, perhaps, the more forcible appeal to our interest, in consequence of their paucity. Left a widow before she had attained to middle life, without any other ostensible means of support besides her own exertions, she not only abstained from becoming a burthen upon the parish, but supported a singularly respectable appearance ; bringing up her children to habits of honest industry, and of something like delicate and even gentlemanly feeling. How she contrived to do all this, seeing that her family consisted of two sons and three daughters, it were a hard matter to say. Her husband, a sea-faring man, it was well known, died poor, and though she kept the village school ever since his decease, the proceeds of that humble seminary were clearly not adequate to cover the expenses to which she appeared to be subject. It is true that one of the lads contributed something towards the support of the rest. He was twelve years old when his mother removed to the school-house, and being a steady and attentive boy, was seldom without a day's work. Yet it seemed inconceivable that the paltry pittance arising from

both of these sources could suffice to defray the costs of an establishment, over which, visit it when you might, an air of extreme neatness and comfort reigned.

It was but natural that an event, unhappily so singular in the south of England, should excite no trifling degree of curiosity among those who witnessed it; and many surmises were in consequence hazarded touching its cause. As Dame Tapsal was not a native of these parts, and nobody knew from whence she came, one rumour in circulation affirmed, that she had lived previous to her marriage with some man of rank, and that she now enjoyed a pension—the reward of her early depravity. Somehow or other, there is in all country places a strong disposition to believe the worst; and the rumour in question, though no one could trace it to its source, gradually obtained almost universal credence; yet were there strong reasons for rejecting it. The woman was, and had ever been since first she came to the parish, a great deal too circumspect in her general conduct to warrant a suspicion so degrading; at least if she had been

guilty, her maturer years exhibited no such traces as a youth of guilt seldom fails to leave behind. The more charitable accordingly discovered a solution to the mystery in a principle of pride, which prompted her to endure many privations in secret without complaining, at the same time that it caused her to keep, perhaps, too much aloof from society and the conversation of her neighbours.

But though industrious to a great degree, and in the strictest sense of the term upright, the widow's career was far from being a placid one. She had not long been settled in her new abode when sickness visited it, and her children, one after another, became infected. She bore this with her accustomed fortitude; and when four out of the five exchanged the mortal for the immortal state, even then she was never known to murmur. Weep she doubtless did,—heavily, bitterly, keenly,—especially when her eldest boy, the pride of her heart, was carried to the grave; but she recovered her composure in a shorter space of time than could have been anticipated, and returned, as if nothing had happened, to her

former occupations. One daughter was yet left to her, in whom her affections, hitherto divided, seemed to centre; and her sole object appeared to be, to rear that girl, that she might make, what is termed, a good settlement in the world.

It is not very easy, sometimes, to account for the pertinacity with which misfortunes follow those, who, as far as outward circumstances can testify to the point, appear by no means to deserve them. Doubtless there is a wise cause for this, though we may be unable to see or comprehend it; and if so, then was Dame Tapsal but one out of many, whom Providence tries for the sake of their ultimate good. The daughter whom she had snatched back as it were, from the brink of the grave, and who during many years was a source of pious consolation to her, proved in the end a cause of her most poignant sorrow. She had scarcely reached the period of early womanhood, when her virtue was undermined by the wiles of an artful seducer, and the widow became a mourner on account of a calamity far more heavy, than any under

which she had previously suffered. But even here the matter ended not. The poor girl, uncontaminated in principle, though blasted in reputation, never held up her head from the time on which her shame became publicly known, and she died soon after she had brought into the world the innocent fruit of her sin.

Now, then, at last Dame Tapsal's fortitude seemed to forsake her. For the first time she was heard to exclaim, that a weight was laid upon her more heavy than she could bear, and in bitterness of spirit to pray that it would please Him who thus severely tried, to remove her at once from the scene of so much suffering. Every body knows, that however prone they may be to speak evil of their neighbours in prosperity, there is no class of persons more prompt to succour such as stand in need of it, than the English peasantry. There was no lack of comforters in the widow's apartment. One took the little orphan and nursed it with her own; another sat all day long with the afflicted grandmother; whilst a third kindly desired permission to occupy, for a few nights, the bed left vacant

by the decease of her daughter. Thus were friends raised up to the desolate in her hour of greatest need; and a mind ready to sink into utter despair, was gradually roused into action.

The same judicious kindness which led to the removal of the infant, whilst yet its presence threatened to heighten the mourner's sorrow, induced the person who had taken charge of it, to bring it back as soon as the bitterness of grief passed away. It was welcomed with an intensity of feeling, of which it would be hard to say whether the character were pleasurable or the reverse; and it was pressed to a bosom that beat with a thousand varied emotions, all of them too powerful for utterance. Yet, upon the whole, the little orphan was welcomed as a gift sent from Heaven. True, it was helpless, and from its helplessness could not fail, at least for a time, to be a serious burden upon one whose increasing infirmities stood in need of support. True, it was the child of sin and shame, a living memorial of a daughter's frailty; but then it was all that was left to her out of a numerous offspring;

it was the only human being in whose veins her blood circulated. She blessed it with an aching heart, as she received it from the arms of its nurse; and from that hour took upon herself again the anxious duties of a parent.

All these events occurred long before I knew any thing of the parish. The orphan, when I arrived, had grown up almost to womanhood, and was, without any exception, the prettiest and most interesting girl in the parish. Who her father was, nobody but her grandmother could say; for though various surmises were abroad, there was no sure ground on which to rest them, the old woman preserving an impenetrable silence. Report had it, indeed, that Eleanor was the daughter of a gentleman; but whether the report was well-founded or otherwise, as the child never became chargeable to the parish, there were no means of ascertaining. One thing, however, is certain, that of such a daughter no man had cause to be ashamed, though many a titled house would have willingly claimed her. Scarcely reaching to the middle stature, her form was cast in a mould of the most perfect symmetry;

and her air and gait, at once dignified and easy, stamped her as one whom Nature never designed to move in the humbler circles. Her face, again, was a very model of Grecian beauty,—pale, placid, perhaps melancholy in its general expression,—yet capable of being lighted up as occasion offered, by smiles of the purest happiness; and her quiet blue eye told a tale of feelings, deep, fervent, yet subdued. On the whole, it is not often that a more attractive creature is seen than Eleanor Tapsal, when she had attained to her seventeenth year, and I first beheld her.

Nor was it from her personal charms alone that Eleanor deserved to be admired. There never lived a more amiable or guileless creature.

"Nobody knows that girl but myself," was Dame Tapsal's usual observation, as often as we chanced to meet her. "I thought when it pleased God to send her into the world, that He was, indeed, resolved to bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave; but experience has taught me that in this, as in all other arrangements, He acted for my good.

She is the best and kindest-hearted child that ever breathed the breath of life; and, as such, dearer to me by a thousand times, than any child that I had. Could I but live to see her respectably settled, my fondest wish would be accomplished."

Thus spoke one, whose strong natural sense was not likely to be blinded by the partial feelings even of a grandmother; and, from all that I could learn of the proceedings of her *protegée*, I am persuaded that she spoke the truth.

Time passed, bringing in its course those changes and revolutions which it usually brings. The old woman, struck with a paralytic affection, became powerless in her limbs, and her mind partaking of the frailty of the body, she relapsed almost into a second childhood. As a necessary consequence, the duties of a nurse devolved upon Eleanor, in addition to the care of providing for her grandmother's subsistence; but the girl's energies seemed to rise with the urgency of the occasion, and she accomplished all with apparent ease and satisfaction. It was a beautiful sight to behold her tending the aged invalid; supporting her tottering steps

to the seat beside the door, or striving to amuse by reading from that book, which the invalid continued to love more from habit, than because she understood it; and not less interesting was she, when, surrounded by her little flock, she divided her care between them and her grandmother.

It was not to be expected that a girl so pretty, and withal so good,—whose acquirements, not less than her person, far surpassed what might have been looked for in her station,—would be regarded with indifference by the young men of the place. It was not often that Eleanor found time or inclination to mix in the gaieties of St. Alphage. She had been educated, whether wisely or otherwise, I pretend not to say, in a fashion which somewhat unfitted her for the society of her ostensible equals; but at Christmas, or other privileged seasons, when she did join in the festivities of the place, no partner was so eagerly sought as herself. Moreover, she was the standing toast at all parish meetings, and the pole star of many an enamoured swain, whose courage failed him at the moment when he desired to

make her aware of her influence over him. Yet were offers of marriage not wanting, some of which deserved, in a worldly point of view, to be pronounced advantageous; for the wheelwright, the blacksmith, nay, the Squire's bailiff himself, were of the number. But Eleanor declined them all. She had no desire to change her way of life; she was sure that Granny could not do without her; and as she loved Granny better than all the world besides, no consideration on earth could induce her to abandon her. These were her constant arguments, even when Granny herself, scarcely conscious of what she said, stood forth as the advocate of a suitor; and as they were advanced with firmness, though with perfect good-humour, they failed not to carry conviction along with them. Doubtless they had their full weight with one whose principles were as sound as her heart was warm; but there was another reason equally powerful: Eleanor had never beheld the man on whom her young heart could lean; and till she should see him, marriage was a thing not to be thought of.

Things continued thus, till Eleanor's twentieth birthday was passed, and it seemed as if they were not likely ever to change their order; when an event befell, which at once, and effectually, broke in upon the even tenor of their existence.

It was on the evening of a summer's day, soon after their little school had been dismissed, that Eleanor and her grandmother seated themselves, as usual, the one with her stockings, the other with her needlework, on a bench beside the door. The sun had just sunk behind the hill, and the whole of the romantic scenery around them glowed in the softened splendour of twilight. The blackbird and the thrush sang sweetly from a neighbouring hedgerow, and the clear full note of the nightingale was beginning to be heard, when they were suddenly startled from the state of mental and bodily quiet into which they had fallen, by a spectacle which is never witnessed without horror. There appeared descending the hill at a tremendous rate, a gig, containing two persons, neither of whom seemed to possess the smallest command over the furious animal that dragged it. On

they came with the speed of lightning, till they had gained an angle in the road, where one path leads down towards the beach, and another by the church-yard up the glen. To have followed the former, at the rate at which they proceeded, must have inevitably led to destruction; no carriage could descend that declivity, except at a foot's pace, without gaining what is technically termed the mastery over the horses, and as a necessary consequence, oversetting. But on either side of the narrow road, there is a precipice many feet in depth, over which, if upset, they must have fallen; and from which there was slender probability that they could have been taken up alive. It is probable that the person who held the reins, saw this; for just as the enraged animal gained the perilous point, he made a desperate effort, and succeeded, almost by a miracle, in turning it.

The consequence of this exertion on the part of the charioteer was, that the horse came on towards the church, like the blast of the simoom. Now the spectators could observe, that he was covered with foam; soon that his head was lowered to his knees, and that the persons who

sat behind, ceasing to make farther efforts to stop him, were looking round for a convenient opportunity to leap out. But before they could effect their object, the carriage dashed round the corner of a wall. Sufficient space was not granted for clearing it; and one of the wheels striking against a protruding angle, was instantly broken. For a moment, as if checked by the resistance offered, the horse paused; the next he again started forward, and the gig falling with a hideous crash, the unfortunate men were thrown out. All these occurrences took place in a shorter space of time than has been expended in relating them; and the horse with its shattered incumbrance rushed past the school-house, before either Eleanor or her grandmother could obey the natural impulse that directed them to retreat within doors.

They had risen, however, for the purpose, and would have carried it, in all probability, into effect, had not the situation of the travellers arrested the movement. One of these was on his feet, exhibiting manifest symptoms that from his perilous fall he had received no material injury; the other lay perfectly motionless, like one in whom life was extinct. A fearful ap-

prehension that the case really was so, instantly darted into their minds, and they trembled violently, as they shrieked, rather than exclaimed, "Good God! one of the gentlemen is killed." The next instant saw Eleanor dart from the cottage across the road, and hurry towards the object of her anxiety, whose plight, though not so desperate as her fears had represented, was certainly bad enough. One of his legs was broken, his left shoulder was dislocated, and he bled profusely from a severe cut in the head which had come in contact with a sharp flint; and though not actually dead, he lay in a state of total insensibility.

The most callous could not look upon such a spectacle without being affected by it, nor the most prudent abstain from offering every assistance in his power. Eleanor, whose feelings were more than ordinarily acute, gave signs of deep commiseration; and without waiting till the request had been made, entreated the wounded man's companion to remove him to the school-house. This was accordingly done, with the help of one or two labourers, whom the accident had likewise drawn to the spot; and he was carefully put to bed, in the best room which Dame Tap-

sal's cottage afforded. Finally, the parish Doctor was called in, the stranger's wounds and bruises were dressed, and the broken limb being set, as well as the dislocation reduced, he was pronounced to be, though extremely ill, in no immediate danger.

It is not necessary to waste time by describing much at length, how the events above recorded were brought about; let it suffice to state that the wounded man was a Captain Morton, a young officer attached to a regiment at that time quartered in Canterbury, and that the individual who accompanied him, and fared so much better than he, was his servant. They were on their way, it appeared, to visit a friend of the Captain, whose corps occupied the barracks at Shorncliffe, when the horse taking fright at the report of a gun, in a field near the road, became furious, and as he was a young and fiery animal, no efforts of theirs had been sufficient to curb him. So much Eleanor and her grandmother heard soon after Morton had been put to bed; and the servant being sent back to head-quarters, with an account of his master's accident, they knew nothing more for many days after.

As little am I required to enter into a minute detail of the young man's sufferings whilst disease lay heavily upon him, or of the care and tenderness shown towards him by his kind-hearted hosts. Enough is done when I inform the reader that for many days the pain arising from his hurts was such as to render him quite insensible to any other consideration; and that the kind-hearted Eleanor intermitted nothing which promised at all to alleviate his distress. Dividing her time, as well as she could, between her grandmother and the stranger, Eleanor seemed scarcely to leave the bedside of the latter either by day or night. All his medicines she administered to him with her own hands; his little gruels and comforts came to him regularly through the same channel; and his very wishes, as far as circumstances would allow, she appeared to anticipate. Attendance like this, aided by a constitution naturally sound, could not fail of producing the best effect; and the young man steadily, though very gradually, recovered.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SCHOOLMISTRESS.

The accident referred to in the preceding page, took place early in June, and before the middle of July, Captain Morton was so far restored as to be able, when the state of the weather permitted, to wander forth for a brief walk from the school-house. I had seen a good deal of him during his confinement, and of course saw more of him now; and what I did see I felt in most respects disposed to admire. He was frank, open, manly, and generous; not very deeply read, it is true, but as well informed as young officers generally are; and his gratitude towards the kind creatures who had contributed so largely towards his recovery, knew, or appeared to know, no

bounds. Money he would have lavished upon them, had their honest pride permitted; but they refused to accept of a shilling beyond what I and the medical gentleman should pronounce a fair remuneration; whilst to his protestations of respect and esteem, and everlasting gratitude, Eleanor at least listened with impatience. There was a circumstance, however, which could not escape the observation of any one at all acquainted with human nature, and which gave me, I confess, no little uneasiness. Morton's attentions to his young nurse became, as his strength returned, more marked, and more peculiar than could have been wished in an intercourse between persons filling situations in life so different; and it was not difficult to discover that these were far from being unacceptable to the individual who was their object.

The truth is, that sickness on the one hand, and unremitting kindness on the other, produced in this instance the effect which they usually produce, when a handsome young man is the sufferer, and a very pretty girl the attendant. Morton naturally regarded with partial eyes the delicate creature who seemed ready

at all moments to soothe his sorrows, and administer to his comforts; whilst Eleanor could hardly fail of acquiring a lively interest in one whose sufferings rendered him in a great measure dependent upon her exertions. As health returned, these sentiments, far from losing, only gained ground on both sides. Eleanor saw in Morton all that her imagination had ever depicted—probably a great deal more than it ever depicted—of what is attractive in man; whilst Morton, finding Eleanor endowed with finer feelings and a more enlarged understanding than frequently attach to persons in her station, believed her to be a very heroine of romance. His gratitude accordingly assumed by degrees a more tender character. He began to look upon her, not as a pretty country girl who had tended him in sickness, and therefore deserved to be rewarded, but as a creature whom fate had by some caprice thrown into a condition quite unworthy of her. In a word, Morton loved Eleanor before he could well understand that there was any danger of his committing so serious an offence; whilst Eleanor, in utter ignorance of the pas-

sion with which she had inspired him, worshipped, rather than loved him in return.

Days and weeks passed over in that state of intense happiness, which, when encouraged under such circumstances as those that attended it here, never fails to end in sorrow. Dame Tapsal either did not observe, or abstained from noticing, the growing intimacy between her grandchild and her lodger; for Morton, now a convalescent, had regularly hired a couple of rooms in the school-house, and the lovers were, in consequence, permitted to enjoy as much of each other's society as they desired. They were constantly together. The invalid's walks were seldom taken till after the school was dismissed, when Eleanor, freed from restraint, was able to accompany him; and they generally chose such retired lanes and passes, as most effectually screened them from the gaze of the curious. It was impossible that such things could long go on in a country place, without public attention being attracted. Those who had formerly been loudest in Eleanor's praise, began now to change their note; and many and bitter were the hints thrown out as

to the probable end of such doings. Nay, numbers affected to discover, that both Eleanor and her grandmother had always possessed spirits too proud for their situation; and it was sagely enough concluded, in the language of Scripture, that "pride goes before a fall." In plain language, Eleanor, instead of being admired and respected as she had been, by persons of all ages and both sexes, became to most an object of suspicion, whilst not a few spoke of her in terms of pretended pity, as one totally and irretrievably ruined.

Though far from inclining to the latter of these opinions, I saw so much of impropriety in the line of conduct which she at present pursued, that I determined, if possible, to put a stop to it. With this view, I was proceeding, on a certain day, towards the school-house, when in the church-yard, through which it behoved me to pass, I was met by Captain Morton. The thought struck me that it were perhaps better to state the case as it stood to him, and I obeyed it. After exchanging the customary salutations, and receiving an assur-

ance of his rapid convalescence, I entered upon my subject, by demanding how much longer he designed to remain amongst us; and how it came about that he was able to absent himself all this while from the routine of his professional duties. He answered these questions with perfect frankness and good-humour; but his answers were far from satisfactory. I therefore adopted a different course.

"Perhaps," said I, "you are not aware that your continued sojourn in a village like this excites some speculation among the rustics, and even among those who rank higher than the rustics."

"That," replied he, "is extremely probable. Of all the peasantry in Europe, our own have their curiosity and surprise most easily excited; but, I presume, it is not on every occasion necessary to gratify the one, or allay the other."

"No," replied I, "unless the characters of ourselves or others be endangered; and then, I take it, we are bound to pay attention even to the surmises of the vulgar."

Captain Morton looked startled. It seemed as if he saw in part into my design, yet were unwilling to confess as much.

"You say truly," answered he; "but in this case there can be no hazard to any body's reputation. I am my own master, at least till my leave expire; and if I choose to spend my time here, who has a right to inquire into the reason?"

"Captain Morton," said I, gravely, "I will be candid with you. The persons with whom you lodge have, as you yourself acknowledge, laid you under serious obligations; I am sure you would not wish, in return for their kindness, to work them evil. But you have already wrought them evil, and if you continue your residence here much longer, that evil will be beyond your power to remedy. Your intimacy with Eleanor has not passed unnoticed, and it can be no satisfaction to you to learn that the very worst construction is put upon it."

"Good God!" exclaimed he, "who has dared to act thus? Eleanor is as pure and good as she was when I first beheld her, and

he that insinuates otherwise is guilty of the grossest injustice."

"That," replied I, "I do not doubt; but surely you must yourself perceive that a continued intimacy between a man of your rank and a girl in her humble station must blast the fame of the latter, however spotless. The world cannot understand that such things may be, and yet be innocently."

"What would you have me do?" asked he. "To injure her from whom I have received so much kindness is the last thing in the world that I desire. How would you have me act, so as to repair the fault which, you say, I have committed?"

"I would have you make immediate arrangements for quitting St. Alphage; and till these are complete, seek the society of Eleanor as little as you can. This is the only means of proving how groundless the rumours are to which your past imprudence has given rise."

"Quit St. Alphage immediately!" replied he; "why, my dear Sir, that is impossible. My home is with my regiment, for my family reside in a remote county; and in my present

state of health the tumult of a barrack were insufferable. Besides, would not proceedings so abrupt tend to strengthen, rather than weaken the suspicions at which you hint?"

"Well, then," said I, "at all events change your lodgings. Those which you inhabit at present cannot be very commodious, and the sea air would assuredly be of benefit to you. Remove at least to Sandgate, or even to Folkstone."

Morton was silent for a minute, and then said, "Even this I am apprehensive that I shall not be able to effect. I have hired my present lodgings for the summer, and it would be but a shabby return to the good dame, were I abruptly to violate my bargain."

"But you may quit your lodgings, without refusing to pay for them," observed I.

There was a second lengthened pause, which he seemed by no means desirous to interrupt, so I broke in upon it. "The truth is, Captain Morton, that something of this kind must be done, otherwise Eleanor is ruined. I cannot for a moment believe that the tales already in circulation have the smallest truth in them;

but it is not what I believe, but what the world believes. Unless you intend to marry the girl, which, I presume, is out of the question, you must cease to live as you do, or you must forfeit the good opinion of all honourable persons."

"Well," replied he, smiling, "you speak plainly at all events, and, I am sure, conscientiously. I will consider of this matter, and if my mature judgment tell me that you are right, I will obey you."

We parted here, and as he had given me this pledge, I considered myself bound to leave the matter, at least for a time, in his hands. I accordingly returned home, and for several days abstained from taking any farther interest in the question.

The lapse of a week served to convince me, that the hope which I had nourished, in consequence of the above conversation, was perfectly groundless. Morton not only made no preparations for shifting his residence, but he continued, day after day, to indulge in those lonely walks with Eleanor, which had already told so much against her; and he studiously

avoided—at least, so it appeared to me—all opportunity of holding farther conversation with me on the subject. Hurt at this, as well because it occasioned me to relinquish, in some degree, the good opinion which I had hitherto nourished of the young man, as because it excited, almost against my will, suspicions of Eleanor herself, I resolved to address myself at once to the girl; and for this purpose I sought her. She was easily found, for Eleanor never shunned any one, least of all myself; and she readily listened to my remarks, though not without extreme emotion. My words seemed to pierce into her very heart. A veil was suddenly torn from before her eyes, and she became aware of the reality of her situation, which she had not hitherto contemplated, except through its medium. She wept bitterly, and having thanked me for my advice, and promised to attend to it, we parted.

I had not quitted her many minutes, when Morton, who happened during my visit to be from home, returned. It was the hour which they usually devoted to their evening walk, and,

as usual, he tapped at the door of the little parlour, as a signal that he was ready and waiting. It was ajar, and he entered,—not to be met, as had hitherto been the case, with smiles and blushes, but to see Eleanor seated in the great chair near the fire-place, and drowned in tears. She rose as he approached, and strove to wipe away the trace of weeping; but her effort availed her nothing; once more she threw herself into the chair, and sobbed violently.

"Eleanor," exclaimed Morton, seriously alarmed as well as shocked, "for Heaven's sake, what is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing, Captain Morton," replied she, struggling hard to compose herself; "nothing but what I ought to have known long ago. We must not walk together any more; it is not fit that a poor girl like myself should keep company with you; and you must leave us."

"Who has put this nonsense into your head?" cried he, whilst his cheek burned with blushes.

"It is not nonsense, Sir," answered the poor girl. "Mr. Williams has just been here, and

has told me how improper my conduct is; and I know that he never says what he does not think, and what he thinks must be right."

"Mr. Williams is no judge of such matters as this, Eleanor. I allow him to be as good a man as lives; but he knows nothing of the world, and has no right whatever to give an opinion in a case quite beyond the reach of his comprehension. Dry up your tears, and come with me as heretofore; I will give you a thousand reasons why, in this instance, Mr. Williams should be mistaken."

"Ah, but it is not Mr. Williams alone that says so," replied Eleanor; "all the neighbours cry out against me, and there is something within, Captain Morton, which assures me that they are right. No, no, we must walk no more together. Go, go, and leave us."

"Never, Eleanor!" exclaimed Morton, advancing towards her, and putting his arm round her waist. "If I have hitherto abstained from speaking to you as I do now, it is not because I have been hitherto insensible to my own feelings. Eleanor, I love you, passion-

ately, ardently love you; we must never part —you must be mine!"

Poor Eleanor could not reply. Her head fell insensibly upon his shoulder, and, with a silence far more eloquent than words, she confessed that of her own fate she was no longer the arbitress. That which followed was exactly such as might have been expected. Eleanor was easily persuaded to keep the true nature of the connection secret, till Morton should be able to reconcile his family to the match; and that evening, and for many evenings after, they walked abroad together as they had done before.

In this manner July glided away, the young people devoting themselves more and more to each other, and the villagers exhibiting by their manner unequivocal proofs that they looked upon Eleanor as utterly fallen. For myself, I spoke even more plainly to Dame Tapsal, than I had done to her grand-daughter; but the old woman's natural acuteness of understanding was gone. She either could not see the force of my reasoning, or

motives of which I was not permitted to weigh the force, induced her to disregard them. She reposed the fullest trust in Eleanor's correct principles. She was sure that Captain Morton would never be villain enough to aim at abusing the confidence with which he was treated; and if he did, she knew her child sufficiently to be aware, that his attempts would meet with no encouragement. I was at no loss in conjecturing, from the general strain of her replies, that the good dame had become a dupe in one of two ways: either she had listened too fondly to the sophistry of her guest; or her ambition, surviving, as it were, every other passion, blinded her into the persuasion that the personal beauty of Eleanor was sufficient to counterbalance the defects of birth and education, and that the affair, if it ended in any thing serious, would end in marriage.

July passed away, and August commenced, bringing with it the termination of Captain Morton's leave of absence. On the tenth it behoved him to be present at head-quarters, and he had already obtained so many indul-

gences, that, to expect more, would have been useless. Of course the lovers determined to make the most of the few days that remained to them, and the school being neglected, the mornings as well as evenings were spent in each other's society. But the progress of time no exertions could arrest, and at last the fatal day arrived which was doomed to witness their parting. Many and ardent were the protestations uttered by Morton, that he would soon return to claim her for his bride; and Eleanor's tears, though they flowed fast, can hardly be said to have been tears of unmitigated sorrow. Hope was still her's,—the hope that never leaves us, till we know from sad experience how little it's syren tones are to be trusted. She had never yet doubted Morton's professions,—how could she doubt them, pronounced as they were with all the energy of deep passion and fervent grief? No, no! for a time, doubtless, she was doomed to be desolate enough, but in the end all her sorrows would be dispelled. Thus they parted, he with vows of eternal fidelity upon his lips, and she with a strong persuasion in her heart,

that those lips could utter nothing but the truth.

For some weeks after Morton's departure, nothing occurred calculated to excite the apprehensions of Eleanor that her confidence had been misplaced. It is true that he came not, as he had promised—but then he wrote regularly once a week, and his absence was easily accounted for by a press of military duty, which, as she well knew, it was impossible for him to evade. She accordingly persevered in her own quiet way, existing upon memory when hope began to wax faint, and applying again to hope when memory by chance failed her. Thus the remainder of August and the whole of September were passed, and October with its cold winds and short days, found matters unchanged. Now then, at length, Eleanor began to apprehend that all was not as it ought to be. He had solemnly assured her that within three weeks at the farthest he should be able to arrange his affairs; but six weeks were gone without his pledge being redeemed, and what was worst of all, his very correspondence began, by degrees, to be

both less regular, and more distracting. Poor Eleanor! now, at length, doubts and fears began to pass like dark shadows over her, and visions the most hideous rose as frequently into her mind as their opposites.

It was the month of November, and for five weeks previously, Eleanor had received no communication from Morton. Day after day she repaired to the post-office, with a quick step and a beating heart; and day after day she returned, dejected, disappointed, sorrowful, and visibly changed. Her's was not a constitution to hold out against the inroads of violent agitation, and her health began rapidly to decline. Still she clung to the persuasion that even yet Morton meant not to deceive. She looked back upon the hours that she had watched beside his sick bed; she remembered his expressions of gratitude uttered there; she traced once again the whole progress of his passion, and seeing in it nothing from which the most sensitive delicacy could shrink, she would not permit the idea to root itself in her mind, that time could change him. Nevertheless, anxiety,

doubt, fear, and hope itself, made visible inroads upon her health; and long before the year expired, she was pronounced to be in a decline.

From what has already been stated of Eleanor's temperament of mind and body, the reader will easily understand that consumption, once begun, would, in her case, do its work with even more than common rapidity. The case was so. Week by week, day by day, hour by hour, she wasted, till at last she kept her bed entirely. All hope of her recovery was now laid aside, and she herself perceived, not less surely than those about her, that her days were numbered.

She was thus circumstanced, having received no communication from Morton during three months previously, when, on a cold gusty day in February, in the midst of a heavy fall of snow, a carriage drove to the door of the school-house. I happened at the moment to be in her room, and saw from the window a young man alight, whom I instantly recognised as Morton. I hurried out of the chamber with the view of arresting him in his progress, fearful of the consequences that

might follow, should his arrival be made too suddenly known; and I met him, just as he had raised the latch, and was about to enter.

"Ah, Mr. Williams!" cried he, grasping me by the hand, "this is, indeed, a happy omen. Now confess, before I see Eleanor, that you did me injustice; for here I am, after many serious trials, come in my own proper person to prove that I am not the villain you accounted me."

I was much affected, and my countenance betrayed my feelings.

"How is this?" exclaimed he, "sorrowful, downcast! surely nothing is wrong with Eleanor? She is still the gentle and affectionate creature that she was when she and I parted? What mean these melancholy looks? I had anticipated a different welcome from this."

"Come with me," said I, "to the Vicarage, and you shall know all; but speak softly while you are here. Eleanor has been ill; your voice might agitate her even fatally."

I never beheld a more sudden change of expression than passed at this announcement over Morton's face. His smile withered, as

it were, upon his lip; and in a state of agitation that left him no power over himself, he permitted me to draw his arm through mine, and to lead him away. It is probable that from my manner, he expected to hear even more tremendous tidings than those which awaited him; for at first, though I asserted the contrary over and over again, he seemed to doubt whether Eleanor were not already dead. But when satisfied that the case was not so, hardly any persuasions of mine could prevail upon him to remain apart from her. A single word from his lips would go farther, he asserted, towards her recovery, than all the prescriptions of the faculty; and it were the height of cruelty to detain him where he was a moment longer. I persisted, however, in my entreaties, that he would at least allow me to prepare her for the interview; and to that he at last gave a reluctant consent.

Leaving him in the Vicarage, I hurried off to the school-house, for the purpose of executing my assumed trust; and I was already within a rood of the door, when a shrill and ear-piercing cry rang through my brain, and

forcibly arrested my progress. That it came from Eleanor's chamber, could not be doubted; but by whom uttered, or on what occasion, it was no easy matter to divine. I sprang forward in a state of apprehension the more distressing because it was vague; and hurrying to the sick room, was soon made aware of the catastrophe which had occurred. There was no effect of over-wrought feeling, no sudden shock of the nervous system, for Eleanor knew nothing of Morton's arrival; but an equally sudden, though perhaps a less tumultuous agitation, ended at once her sorrows and her life. A violent fit of coughing had burst a blood-vessel, the crimson stream from which flooded the floor, and Eleanor, after uttering the shriek that so appalled me, fell asleep.

Over the scene which followed, I must draw a veil of forgetfulness; it too nearly resembles one in which I was myself an actor, to be thought of, even now, with calmness, and to record it minutely, is a task to which I find myself incompetent; let it suffice to state, that the horror of Morton, when that terrible

issue was communicated to him, left an impression upon all who witnessed it, not to be effaced: and that whatever might have been the conduct of the villagers towards Eleanor in her lifetime, at her death she was sincerely lamented. She was buried without parade in a grave selected for her by her betrothed, and a stone raised to her memory.

With respect to Morton himself, it is but justice to say, that as he never made the most distant attempt to undermine the virtue of his artless sweetheart, so to the last he had continued faithful to her. But Morton was an only son, whose parents revelled in wealth; and the idea of his marrying a village girl was one which they could not be brought to admit. The consequence was, that every obstacle was thrown in the way of the indulgence of his wishes; nor was it till their opposition began seriously to affect his health, that they gave at last a reluctant consent. His long silence, again, though injudicious, was by no means unkindly meant. Deeming it utterly hopeless to look for his father's sanction to the match, he did what he considered to be his duty, by dropping a cor-

respondence which promised to lead to nothing; and he acted thus, not more with a view to his own welfare, than to that of Eleanor. He calculated on the pliability of an untutored peasant girl, and took it for granted, that were she satisfied of his intention to violate his promises, she would cease to take an interest in his fate. Such, at least, was his own account of the matter; though for its truth I pretend not to vouch.

One thing, however, is certain, that of Dame Tapsal he ever after took the greatest care. He settled upon her a pension, sufficient to maintain her in comfort without the aid of a school, which she was no longer capable of teaching; and though she lived to reap the fruits of his bounty but a very short time, it deserves not the less to be recorded.

Such was the fate of Eleanor Tapsal the Schoolmistress.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SHIPWRECK.

DURING the months of February and March, in the year 18—, the coast of Kent was visited by a succession of violent storms, which caused a greater quantity of damage to the shipping and villages on the sea-shore than had been known to have occurred in the memory of man. On a certain day in the earlier part of the latter month, my duties led me to visit that quarter of my parish which lies on the other side of the last range of hills, and adjacent to the parish, or rather to the outskirts, of the town of Folkestone. The wind was out with a degree of fury, such as even I, who reside so near this tempestuous coast, have seldom witnessed. The clouds were not sailing, but rushing through the sky, in grey fleeces; a huge black mass came up from time to time upon the blast,

driving away from east to west, and sending forth a shower of hailstones, which beat in my face as I ascended the height, and compelled me more than once to cling to a piece of gorse, or fern, for support. The sheep were all cowering under the hill-top for shelter, with their backs turned towards the storm, and huddled closely together; and the shepherds either took their places beside them, or ran home to their different houses amongst the glens and hollows near. It was, indeed, a day in which no one who could find a roof to cover him would have chosen to be abroad; so boisterous was the gale, and so keen and cutting were the gusts of hail and sleet which rode from time to time upon it.

It is impossible for one whose habitation, though it be shut out from a view of the ocean, stands within the sound of its waves, when they are in wrath, not to think with peculiar anxiety, during every gale or storm, of the poor mariners who are exposed to its violence. To-day, in particular, I felt myself full of apprehension; for there was a considerable fleet of vessels at anchor in the Downs, and several large Indiamen had been seen at a late hour last night not far from the Point of Dunge-

ness. They had not passed during the night; indeed, the night had been too dark, and too blustering, to encourage them to lift their anchors; but the gale had increased so much towards sun-rise, and was still so heavy, that I could hardly hope that the anchors had not dragged, or, which might prove even more fatal, that the cables had not parted.

As I neared the top of the hill, the noise of the mighty element increased upon me, till its roar would have almost drowned the thunder itself, so loud and so increasing had it become. But if the sense of hearing had impressed me with feelings of awe, these feelings were increased to an indescribable degree by the spectacle which presented itself to the sense of sight. Immediately below me was the ocean, boiling and foaming far and near—one huge cauldron of troubled waters, which tossed and tumbled, as if a thousand fires were burning beneath it. The coast of France, which, on other days, may be distinctly seen, even to the glancing of a sun-beam on the windows of the houses in Calais, was now entirely hidden. I could not, indeed, send my gaze beyond mid-space between

the two shores; and from that point onwards, wave followed wave, in fearful succession, till, one after another, they burst in tremendous force upon the chalky cliffs and pebbly strand of Kent. The town of Folkestone appeared devoted to utter destruction. The tide was pouring through its lower streets, sweeping all live and dead substances before it; the few fishing vessels which had been moored in the harbour were lying high and dry, far up the side of the hill, or floating in broken fragments upon the water; whilst the inhabitants, who had with difficulty escaped, were congregated in the upper parts of the town, to watch with grief and dismay the progress of a power to which human ingenuity could oppose no obstacle. All this was awful enough; but my fears were too much alive for the brave men who were embarked in ships, to think much of the state of those who suffered only from a loss of property.

I looked anxiously, first towards the Downs, and afterwards in the direction of Dungeness. From the former point the fleet had entirely disappeared. Many I saw stranded upon the shore; others had probably escaped to a more

safe anchorage; and those which had endeavoured to beat out to sea, were just visible on the lower part of the Goodwins. The waves were dashing over their broken hulls, and their very masts were hidden, as every breaker, of a size somewhat larger than the rest, burst upon them. For them and for their crews there was no hope—all must perish—and all did perish before I quitted my station. In the direction of Dungeness, again, only one ship could be descried. She had succeeded, apparently, in working out before the storm had reached its height; and now having secured sea-room, was endeavouring to scud, either for the Downs or the river. Her top-gallant-masts were all struck; the only sail hoisted was the fore-top-sail, and that close-reefed; under which she made way, rapidly indeed, but not without falling every moment faster and faster to leeward. It was, in truth, manifest, that if she persisted in going on, she must run ashore several miles on this side of Deal: and of that her crew appeared to be as fully convinced as those who watched her from the land.

She was now abreast of Folkestone, with a

hurricane right on shore, and herself not above a mile and a half from the breakers. Having carried a telescope in my hand, I saw by the help of it that her decks were crowded with people, some of whom held by the rigging and shrouds, others by the binnacles and bulk-heads; whilst some were lashed to the wheel, by which they vainly endeavoured to guide her. An attempt was now made to wear, but it failed. The ship reeled round, and drove towards the shore with a velocity which caused me to shut my eyes, that I might escape at least the horror of beholding her strike. But she did not strike. Two anchors were let go at once from the bow. By little short of a miracle, they held; and as if Heaven itself had desired to save her, the tempest suddenly lulled. The waves, however, ran as they had run before, "mountain high;" consequently no boat could be launched to her assistance; and there she rode, straining and pitching her bows and bulwarks under, at the mercy of a couple of cables, and a couple of crooked bits of iron.

Having stood for about half an hour to observe her, and fancying that, as she had hitherto

done well, she would continue so to do, especially as I thought that I could observe a clearing up to leeward, indicative of a change of wind, I paid the visit which I set out to pay, and returned home. Here the rest of the morning was spent in alternate hope and fear, as the face of the heavens seemed to indicate a total cessation, or a renewal of the storm; but hope gradually gave way to alarm, and alarm grew into despair, soon after darkness began. The sun went down fiery red, like a ball of burning coal. The wind, as if hushing him to sleep, began again to renew its violence. It came, for a while, in alternate lulls and gusts; which, succeeding each other more rapidly every moment, ended at length in the same tremendous hurricane which had prevailed during the day. I could not sit quietly in my chair. "I must go," said I, "to see how the Indiaman fares; and I will pray upon the beach for the poor people whom I cannot otherwise serve." So saying, I put on my great coat, and seizing my hat and stick, sallied forth.

The clock struck nine as I laid my hand on

the latch; and I rejoiced to find, on crossing the threshold, that it was moon-light. I looked up into the sky, and beheld the fleeces receding in the direction which they had followed in the morning; but not so thick as greatly to obscure the moon's rays; which, on the contrary, shone out clear and bright occasionally, and at all times exerted some influence. I rejoiced at this; not only because I regarded it as a good omen, but because I hoped that it might prove of essential service to the people on board; whose fears, at least, would be more tolerable than if the night had been pitchy dark; and under this impression, I pushed on with a quick pace. But my satisfaction was not of long continuance,—if, indeed, the feeling which the mere glancing of the moon's rays had excited, be worthy of that title.

I had not yet reached the top of the hill, when the report of a gun, heard amidst the roar of the tempest, assured me that the vessel had struck. It came upon me like the last despairing shriek of a drowning man, who cries out because Nature so urges him, though aware that no human aid is at hand. Nor were

my prognostications erroneous. When I attained the summit, I beheld a multitude of lights glancing along the shore; I heard voices and shouts, and every other indication which sound could give, that all was over. I ran towards the spot, and beheld the ship, her masts gone and her hull broken, in the midst of the breakers, at the distance of a full mile and a half from the land. Another gun was fired—it was the last. Planks, bulk-heads, and spars, began now to drive upon the shingle. A sort of rending noise came from the wreck, which instantly disappeared. She had split up into fragments, and of the living creatures which had hitherto clung to her, the majority found a grave amid the surf.

There are few spectacles more appalling, and at the same time more full of deep excitation, than that of a shipwreck. Not only is your attention drawn to the vessel and its crew, but the hurry and bustle on shore—the real sympathy displayed by men from whose outward appearance little sympathy could be augured—the cries, and exclamations, and movements of the crowd, all tend to give to the thing a degree

of additional interest, which, in sober earnest, it hardly requires. It is enough to see a number of our fellow-creatures hovering on the brink of eternity, without having our feelings additionally worked upon by the proceedings of those around us.

A cry was now raised for boats. "Where is the Dauntless?" shouted one. "High and dry," exclaimed another. "Is the Nancy safe?" "No, she is in pieces." And so it was, that not a boat or barge of all that usually lay at anchor in the harbour could be brought on the instant into play. But the Kentish fishermen are not restrained from action by trifles. "Launch the Dauntless,"—"Down with the Sisters,"—"There lies the Pilot," were echoed from mouth to mouth; and in half a second, an hundred hands were at work, hauling the boats named from the beach, where the ebb tide had left them, and rolling them along the shingle. "Hurrah, hurrah!" was now the only word uttered. Down they came over the loose stones, till they neared the reach of the waves, and then, having watched a receding billow; the gallant party which

dragged them hurled them into the breakers, whilst half a dozen stout fellows sprang into each as it rose upon the foam. "God speed ye, God speed ye! away, away!" and away they went. But the next wave was fatal to two of them. Over they rolled, bottom upwards, and the crews were dashed upon the beach. The third, however, rode it out. She bore one lantern in her bow, and another in her stern; and it was truly a nervous thing to watch these lights appearing and disappearing, as the brave boat rose and fell with the rise and fall of the waters.

In the mean while, many eyes were eagerly turned towards the water-mark, with the expectation of discovering some human creature who might be washed ashore, on a plank or raft. All such, however, came tenantless. Either the beings who had clung to them lost their hold, or, not expecting the ship to part so suddenly as she did, they neglected the precaution of making themselves fast to the spars. Our best hope, accordingly, centred in our own boat, which we saw bravely making her way; the tide

being in her favour, though the wind was against her. At length she appeared to have gained her utmost limit. There she lingered, rising and falling, her lights glancing and disappearing to our unspeakable terror, for a full quarter of an hour; when having, as it would seem, done her utmost, she put about, and made towards land. Twenty torches were held up to guide her. Her progress was like that of the lightning, and her crew having watched the opportunity, she mounted upon the top of a wave, and rushed with its white foam, far up the beach. Then our party running in, seized her by the bow, and so securing her against the ebbing, in three seconds she was safe.

The search which her dauntless rowers had undertaken, proved all but fruitless. So complete was the wreck, that they could not discern any single portion of the Indiaman more attractive than the rest. Nothing could be observed, indeed, in the darkness of the night, except floating boards, all of them without occupants; and hence their sole success was in saving the life of one man, whom they found clinging to

a hen-coop, and a good deal exhausted. I must do the men of Kent the justice to observe, that the shipwrecked individual had no right to complain of want of hospitality. Each of the spectators appeared more anxious than the rest to afford him accommodation; and it was only because I pressed his removal to the Vicarage, that they yielded the point to me. A post-chaise was accordingly prepared, into which we lifted him; and as the distance by the road exceeds not one mile, he was undressed, and laid in our best bed, within half an hour of his landing. Some mulled wine and other cordials being administered to him, he was left to his repose, and it was not till a late hour on the following day, that the ringing of his bell gave testimony that he had awoke from the sleep into which our narcotics had lulled him.

When he joined our family circle next morning, we were all much struck with the appearance and demeanour of the stranger. He was very tall, considerably upwards of six feet—his figure was commanding and noble—his features were fine; but there was an expression of wild-

ness in his dark eye, which could not pass unobserved. His age I should guess to have been about fifty; perhaps it was under that, for black hair soon grows grey; and the lines, which were strongly marked in his forehead, seemed to be the traces rather of violent passions than of time. With respect to his manner, it is not very easy to describe it. No one could mistake that he was a gentleman; but there was a restlessness and incoherence in his conversation, which produced the reverse of an agreeable sensation upon those around him. It was curious enough that he never once alluded, of his own accord, to the events of yesterday. We, of course, referred to them, and were beginning to congratulate him upon his escape, but he abruptly changed the subject, by asking some trifling questions respecting the surrounding country. Had any person entered the parlour, ignorant of the mode of his arrival amongst us, he would have imagined that the stranger had landed the day before, in perfect safety, and in an ordinary way, from a voyage. The effect of all this upon the ladies was to create in them feelings of absolute horror, and they soon

began to view him with dismay; for myself, I was astonished, and more than half-suspected that the poor gentleman was not altogether in his sound senses.

The stranger continued an inmate of my house for three whole days, and nothing passed between us all this while beyond the common intercourse of social life. I did not deem it consistent with propriety to demand his name, or to make any inquiry into his condition; and he, as it appeared, felt no inclination voluntarily to offer the information. Only once he observed, casually, that he was afraid he must intrude upon my hospitality till he should receive remittances which might enable him to travel; for that there was no money in his pockets when the ship foundered, and that all his effects had perished. Beyond this, however, he communicated to me nothing, and of his company I enjoyed no more than was absolutely indispensable during meals.

Whilst his sojourn lasted, our mode of living was accordingly this: The stranger rose early, and walked out; he returned to breakfast, which he hastily swallowed, and then went forth

again; and immediately on the conclusion of dinner, he retired to his apartment, where the remainder of the evening was spent in writing. This I learned from my servant, who carried up lights when he rang for them; and because he had requested me to supply him with pens, ink, and paper; but whether they were letters, or what the subject of his writings might be, I of course had no means of ascertaining. On the evening of the third day, however, a slight change occurred in his manner. He sat with me after the dinner had been removed, and made an effort to be sociable, but he drank no wine; and continually, after supporting a common-place conversation for several minutes, relapsed into silence. The ladies soon left us, and then it was that I determined to sound him, as delicately as I could, on the state of his mind.

The fire was blazing brightly, for the evening was frosty and calm; we had drawn our chairs round it, and I again urged him to take wine. "I have not tasted wine," said he, "these twenty years, and I may not taste it while I live."—"Perhaps it disagrees with you; you may be of a consumptive or inflam-

matory habit?"—"I know not what you mean by inflammatory," said he; "there are inflammations of the body, and inflammations of the mind; mine is, I believe, of the latter description. Is it not strange," continued he abruptly, "that the only individual saved out of a whole ship's company, should be one who desired it not? Heavens! if you had heard the lamentations of the poor wretches in that vessel when she struck, if you had seen their wild and despairing looks—strange, strange, that they should perish, and I survive. Are you a fatalist?"

I must confess, that this commencement of familiarity between us by no means delighted me. I looked at my guest again, and saw with horror a sort of smile or grin upon his countenance, indicative of a feeling such as I could not commend. "I am not a fatalist," answered I; "nor am I able to conceive how any rational being can adopt a creed so absurd. He who regards himself as the mere tool of invincible destiny, must hold his opinion in direct opposition to the surest of all testimony—that of consciousness."—"Yet some of the wisest men

the world has ever produced were fatalists," rejoined he. "Among the celebrated writers of antiquity, almost all were fatalists. Homer and Hesiod were both fatalists. Socrates and Plato were of the same way of thinking; so were Zeno, Chrysippus, Epicurus, and all the Stoics. So was Herodotus, so was Lucretius. Seneca has declared, that the same chain of necessity constrains both gods and men; and even Cicero shows, in more passages than one, a leaning favourable to a similar view of the subject. In India, fatalism has ever prevailed. Those wise men, for an acquaintance with whose philosophy the sages of Greece scrupled not to undertake long and dangerous journeys, were all believers in irresistible destiny; and the principles which they held, their descendants hold at the present day. Mohammed was a fatalist, and though he played upon the credulity of mankind, who will deny him the praise of transplendent talents? And to come nearer home, has not our own country produced a host of fatalists among her distinguished sons? What was Hobbes, Lord Kames, Hume, Priestley, ay, and greater than all these, what was Locke?

A man may well be pardoned who adopts opinions which can be supported by such names as these."

Though not very anxious to enter into a metaphysical discussion, and though, indeed, I had hoped to draw my guest into a conversation on his own situation and circumstances, rather than to follow him through the labyrinth into which I saw we were about to plunge, I considered it due to my character and station to notice this remark:—"With respect to the classical writers you have named," replied I, "it is very true that the greater number are generally considered to have held the sentiments you attribute to them; my own persuasion, however, is, that the opinion is ill-founded. Whether Socrates was a fatalist or not, we are scarcely competent to judge, inasmuch as none of his own writings have come down to us; but I see the reverse of proof of the matter in the account given of his philosophy by his pupils. It was surely not consistent with fatalism to look forward, as he undeniably did, to a state of rewards and punishments beyond the present life. Fatalism, properly so called, is directly

contrary to a theory, which necessarily depends upon moral responsibility; for moral responsibility cannot exist without perfect freedom of will. Of all the philosophers, therefore, whom you have enumerated, perhaps Lucretius is, in point of fact, the only real fatalist. Seneca speaks indeed, in the sentence referred to, too strongly; but he more than once contradicts himself; whilst his reflections on the approach of death clearly imply, that, in the proper sense of the term, he was no fatalist. The fatalism of Aristotle and Plato, again, extended only to such matters as we should call accidental occurrences; indeed, it may be held as a general truth, that not one among them all, Lucretius only excepted, no, not even the Stoics themselves, carried their notions on this head into the region of morals. As a proof of this, you have only to attend to the leading principle of their doctrines. The Stoics held, that the mind should not depend upon the body at all; that perfection was to be attained only by the absolute subjection of the passions to the understanding. Now, such an opinion cannot surely subsist, with a persuasion, that man is a mere

machine, continually guided by the most pressing motives. For this, I apprehend, is all that can be meant by moral fatalism. That you should have enumerated Cicero among the defenders of fatalism, particularly surprises me. True, he sometimes employs the common language of the day, exactly as I might remark, that the falling of my horse, or the dislocation of my arm, occurred by chance, though quite aware that chance is a non-entity. But when he seriously treats of fate, and its influence, he attributes to it no more power than we should attribute to Providence. Lucretius was indeed a fatalist, and to teach fatalism in its true sense, is one object of his writings; but even he contradicts himself more than once, as all men must who support opinions in the face of their own consciousness.

"With respect to the sentiments of the Brahmins and of Mohammed, I scarcely think that they were worth quoting; whilst the contradictions and absurdities into which our own writers fall, have been pointed out too frequently to render it necessary that I should point them out again. Of Locke's fatalism,

however, I would observe, that it amounts to nothing more, than a firm persuasion of the necessity which exists, that there should be some invisible power, not corporeal, to guide by fixed laws the corporeal world. Beyond this, I can discover no evidence of his having gone; and I esteem it an unfair thing towards him, that his name should be held out as giving authority to sentiments so outrageous. But perhaps I am doing you injustice all this while. Your fatalism, probably, goes no farther than my chance; and if so, I freely allow, that, in our progress through life, many events happen for which we find it no easy matter to account."

The stranger was silent for some moments, and so was I; for I was not desirous of continuing the controversy, and yet wished not to appear afraid of it.

"It may be so," he at length said, and his countenance assumed at the same time a cast of deep melancholy; "I may be mistaken. There may be no power superior to us—we may be our own puppets, and not the puppets of fate; but I would give worlds to think otherwise. Do you see this mark?" continued he, at the

same time untying his cravat, and exhibiting a broad scar round his throat, as if an iron collar had cut into the skin for many years; "How came that there?"

"How can I tell?" replied I. "Perhaps you were born with it, or—"

"Perhaps it was forced upon me," interrupted he, and then laughed hysterically.

I was now quite convinced, that the unfortunate man's reason was unsettled, and began to wish him fairly on his way to some other abode. But he recovered his composure again instantly, and, starting a new subject of conversation, became as rational and collected as possible. I now learned from him, for the first time, that he had taken his passage at Calcutta, having spent several years in India, and was returning to enjoy the fruits of his services at home. When he used the word "enjoy," indeed, I saw the same Satanic curl of the lip which had shocked me before; but it soon passed away, and during the rest of the evening he was more collected and rational than we had seen him. He remained with us till our usual hour of parting; and then, having coldly wished good night to

the ladies, and waited till they retired, he addressed himself to me in the following terms:—

"I have to thank you, Sir, for much kindness and hospitality,—kindness bestowed upon one whom you did not know, and who is far from being worthy of it. I likewise owe to your people my life. It is a poor boon; but it must not go unrequited. Do me the favour to distribute the contents of this purse amongst them. To yourself I can offer no remuneration; but as I see that you feel an interest in me, and that my manner has excited your curiosity, I have determined to gratify it. To enter into the detail of my own history in ordinary conversation, is a task too hard for me;—I have not even noted it down upon paper without much suffering. But it is recorded, and the sad record I now commit to you. This night I take my departure. My real name you will, of course, excuse me for concealing, as well as the names of other actors in the eventful drama; but the facts stand as they occurred. Why I have thus made you my confidant, I cannot tell. I have never acted so with any one besides; and the fact that I am now in-

trusting a mere stranger with a secret such as mine, confirms me in my belief, that we are none of us our own masters.—Farewell! I hear the carriage at the door."

The stranger here put into my hands the produce of his nocturnal labours, in the shape of a packet of papers closely written; and before I had time to remonstrate with him on the abruptness of his departure, or to press his stay, he had quitted the house;—the noise of wheels was soon heard, and the stranger was gone. I never saw or heard of him afterwards.

As soon as I had so far recovered my astonishment as to be fully convinced that the stranger was gone, I sat down to peruse the manuscript which he had committed, under circumstances so peculiar, to my care. It was written in a clear, strong, legible hand. Here and there traces of haste might be discovered in it, as if the writer had hurried over a passage or two under the influence of excited feelings; but, in general, the person who inspected it would have said, that it had been compiled with perfect composure—even deliberation. Yet the opening was certainly not such as a man

in his calm and rational senses would have given. The idea of fatalism seemed to have taken a strong hold upon the individual's mind, and his story, accordingly, began with the following expressions.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FATALIST.

"I AM a fatalist. I am perfectly satisfied, and from the first dawn of reason I have been satisfied, that the things which men call chance and free will, exist only in their own bewildered imaginations. It is very flattering to human pride to suppose, that each man guides himself in all the changes and occurrences of life; that his own will, or his own reason, or something worthy to be called his own, directs his action and regulates his thoughts. A slight degree of attention to passing events must, however, convince all who reflect, that the human will, even if it be the spring of human actions, is itself no more than part of a complicated machine, which is acted upon, and set in motion by a power which it cannot control. Were it not so, why should instances

occur, I say not frequently, but constantly, of persons ruining their own peace wantonly, with their eyes open, and with no other discernible purpose in view? Why should the miser hoard his gold, and starve? Why should the spendthrift waste his substance, knowing all the while that he must bring himself to poverty? Why should the thousand extravagancies occur, which society daily places before us, were not all men, without exception, mere machines? Nay, nay, read the following narrative, and then determine whether it be possible to conceive that the freedom of will, which all are so anxious to claim, could have ever had existence, at least in me.

"I am the representative of a family, which, from the period of the Norman Conquest, has held considerable estates in the county of Rutland, and which, by a steady adherence to the custom of entail, has managed to preserve its estates almost in their pristine extent. My mother dying whilst I was an infant, and my father before I reached my tenth year, I was left to the care, or rather to the neglect, of certain titled personages, who called themselves

my guardians, because they were so called in my father's will; but who conceived that they did enough when they entered me at one of our public schools, and permitted me to spend my vacations wherever and however my own fancy might suggest. Thus were my habits, temper, disposition, and pursuits, allowed to form themselves as chance directed, without any human being giving himself the trouble to advise me to what was good, or to warn me against what might be evil.

"Nature had, however, settled these points so effectually, that I do not believe any care on the part of others would have made me very different from what I am. My earliest recollections represent me as a selfish, violent, capricious, revengeful being; as one who desired a thousand things which he had not, and who no sooner obtained them, than he ceased to value them. It strikes me, indeed, that in my younger days I was never wantonly or gratuitously tyrannical. I cannot remember, that whilst at school, I oppressed the little boys. I never crouched to the big ones, for I was not mean. But an injury I never forgave. How-

ever apparently slight it might be,—were it but a cross word, or look,—I never felt at ease till I had taken vengeance for it; nor was any labour too severe, or any plan too complicated, provided I saw the chance of obtaining my end by enduring the one, and acting upon the other.

"I will give but one specimen of myself in my character of a revenger of wrongs, whilst I was at school. One of my companions, my favourite companion for the time, played off upon me, on a particular occasion, some trifling practical joke. It raised a laugh against me, and I burned to chastise him for it. To beat him was not in my power, for he was older and stronger, and a better master of the pugilistic art than I. To repay him in kind would not satisfy me. I knew that he would not feel as I felt, were he put in ever so ridiculous a light, but would probably laugh at the circumstance as readily as those about him. What I desired was to give him positive pain; and I succeeded. He had a favourite dog, a white terrier, to which he was strongly attached. The animal used to go with us when we were out

rabbit-shooting; and the boy was naturally proud of its good nose, and great activity. I watched my opportunity one day, and pretending to mistake it for a rabbit, I shot it dead; my revenge was ample.

"In like manner, with respect to caprice, I may observe, that I never loved any of my companions beyond the space of a few weeks, or, at most, a few months. The consequence is, that I never have had, and never expect to have, one friend. Of reptiles, who called themselves such, I have known many; but whenever an acquaintance has done me a favour, or exhibited a superiority over me in any respect, I have invariably quarrelled with him. Of all feelings, that of being under an obligation to another man, is to me most insupportable.

"With these dispositions, and in the course of acting which they were calculated to produce, my boyhood and youth were spent. I left school for college, detested by all who knew me, and cordially detesting them in return; and I passed through the usual academical career without forming a single connexion which has survived it. It was then the fashion to travel.

I followed that fashion, and travelled too; but my tutor and I quarrelled before half our tour was completed, and I left him. I returned home, determined to live for myself alone at the family mansion in Rutlandshire.

"Having formed this prudent resolution, I endeavoured to acquire a decided taste for field-sports. I kept hounds, and hunted, or affected to hunt them myself. I invited all my neighbours to come and see me; pretended to be pleased when the field was full, and the sportsmen adjourned to my house; but, somehow or another, they and I fell out. Our quarrels too were generally about circumstances which no human being would have quarrelled about, except myself. One man, for example, was better mounted than I; I was desirous of purchasing his horse, and he would not sell it. We never spoke again. Another rode better, and took the lead of me. I cursed him cordially, and so our acquaintance ended.—Thus it was, that, at the age of four-and-twenty, and after spending little more than two years at home, I found my table absolutely deserted, except when the village apothecary

found it convenient to eat my venison and drink my claret. Even the parson was too proud, or too right-minded, call it which you will, to put up with my freaks and humours; and he ceased to be my guest, though there was no man in the county with whom I was more desirous of continuing on a friendly footing.

"When I say this, do not suppose for a moment that I courted the rector's society from any feeling of respect either for his character or talents. Both were undoubtedly excellent; indeed, if merit were rewarded as it ought to be, he never would have remained so long as he did upon that living. But what were the man's character and talents to me? Nothing, or worse than nothing; inasmuch as I never heard him praised without suspecting that the design of his laudator was to pass censure upon myself. By no means. The chances are, that I should have liked him better had he been a profligate; for in truth, it was on account of his daughter, a lovely and gentle creature. Well, well, let that pass.

"I say, that the rector of my parish, whom, for the sake of perspicuity, I shall call Travers,

had a daughter. Oh such a daughter! When I came to reside at Claremont, she had barely completed her seventeenth year. Sir, you never beheld the picture of an angel so beautiful, you never will behold a real angel (if there be such things) worthy to stand a comparison with her. And her mind, and heart, and disposition — there exists not her fellow throughout the universe. I loved her madly; but my love for her, like my love for every thing else, was purely selfish. Judging of her from the specimens of her sex which had heretofore crossed me, I dreamed that it would be no difficult matter to obtain her on my own terms; so I laboured assiduously, but with extreme caution, to accomplish her ruin. The young creature was far too pure to understand me. I gained her affections, — how, I am sure that I cannot tell,—but upon her morals and innate chastity I made no inroad; of course, I was too well versed in these matters to make my advances very openly, and she was far too delicate in her ideas to detect any thing amiss in my proceedings.

"Not so her father. The rector, though a

scholar, was a man of the world, and readily saw into the motives which led me to pay attention to his daughter. He challenged me with my wickedness; and I own it with shame, I quailed beneath his indignant frown. From that hour I hated, though I respected him; but our acquaintance ceased for a time, and I had no means afforded of gratifying my malice.

"To marriage I always had an insuperable objection; and to marry the daughter of a country parson would, I conceived, disgrace me for ever. Yet to continue near Lucy—to see her, as I contrived to see her, every day—to hear the silver tones of her voice, her warm protestations of continued love, notwithstanding the prohibition of her parent—to do all this, baffled as I constantly was, in my base purposes, without so far committing myself as to propose a union, I felt to be impossible. The struggle was a desperate one, but I resolved to leave the country. I dared not trust myself with a parting interview; for I was conscious of my own weakness, though I despised myself for it; so I desired my valet one morn-

ing to put up my wearing apparel, and throwing myself in my travelling-chariot, set out for London.

"Having now embarked, or rather having resolved to embark, in the business of a fashionable life, I was not so far guided by the caprice of the moment, as to be unaware, that if I desired to act a creditable part in it, (that is to say, if I desired to amuse myself,) it was indispensably requisite for me to lay some restraint upon my natural irritability and caprice. I made the resolution, and adhered to it. Many a pang it cost me, to smile when I felt disposed to frown, and to hold out my fore-finger to men on whom I desired to turn my back, if I did them no more serious injury; yet I so far obtained a mastery over myself, as to be admitted into all the coteries, as well as into the best of the clubs, usually frequented by people of rank. My fortune, indeed, was known to be ample. My rent-roll stood in reality at four thousand a-year—the world set it down at ten; and what are the freaks and fancies which will not be tolerated and excused in a young man supposed to be worth ten thousand a-year? All the un-

married women were a-flutter when I came among them, whilst their mammas took good care that I should be fully informed of their many commendable qualities, and of their amiable dispositions. 'My daughter Fanny,' said the Countess of ——, 'is all excellence. She is really too good-hearted, and too much the slave of delicate feelings. It was only yesterday that she was prevailed upon to subscribe one guinea a-year to the Church Missionary Society; and look here,' drawing my attention to a number of shell pin-cushions, and other gewgaws—'all these she made with her own hands; they are to be sold for the benefit of the children of —— Sunday school. Perhaps you will become a purchaser.'—'Only think, mamma,' said Lady Louisa Gallop, 'the horse that Charles bought for me, took me clear over the bar at the highest notch this morning, in the riding-school.'—'You will never have done, child,' replied mamma, 'till you meet with some serious accident. What strength of nerve she has!' continued the dowager, turning to me. 'She is none of your delicate hot-house plants. Dear creature! what a misery it is for her to be cooped up in town,

when all her wishes point to a country life. You are fond of field-sports, I think, Mr. St. Clair?' Thus was I waylaid at every turn. Did I express my approbation of this or that habit, it was exactly the thing of which Lady Fanny, or Lady Louisa, approved. Did I abhor this or the other mode of proceeding, the young ladies abhorred it also. But all would not do. I looked at these minions of fashion, as an ordinary spectator looks at the birds or butterflies in a museum—I never felt that they could have had one spark of life in them.

"Of this silly mode of living, I soon began to grow tired. My thoughts were eternally wandering into Rutlandshire—to the little drawing-room in the Rectory—and to Lucy, as she has often sat at her instrument, and sung to me like a seraph. A thousand times did I resolve not to suffer pride to stand in the way of my happiness, but to hurry back, confess my errors to her father, and make a tender of my hand and fortune. But then the idea of being triumphed over by a poor country clergyman—of sitting and whining before one so far beneath me in rank and station—this was

gall and wormwood to me—I could not brook it. 'No,' said I, 'I will never marry—at least I will never marry, except to advance me in circumstances, or to add to my dignity.'

"Excitement became now the sole object of my search. Drinking was then in fashion, but I had no taste for it. Intrigues, operas, masquerades, all palled upon me. I ran the round of them till they ceased to affect me, and I was disgusted. Play was my next resource. The dice-box was seldom out of my hand; and, to the honour of hazard be it spoken, for almost an entire season it continued to engross my attention. Like other amateur gamblers, I was, it is true, more frequently the loser than the winner; but that circumstance made no impression upon me. I played on till my ready money became exhausted—I raised several large sums on life-annuities; and I found myself, towards the close of three months—called, in fashionable parlance, 'the winter'—a poorer man by full two thousand pounds per annum than I had been on my first arrival in London.

"About this time, when even the gaming-table was beginning to lose its influence over

me, it chanced that, to kill an hour one morning, I strolled into the British Gallery. I was gazing, or pretending to gaze, at one of the Cartoons which hung at the extremity of apartment No. 2, when my ears actually tingled, and my pulse ceased to beat, at the sound of a sweet voice, to which for some time back I had listened only in my dreams. 'How beautiful!' said the speaker. These were the only words uttered, but the tone of utterance was not to be mistaken. I turned round, and beheld Lucy, leaning upon the arm of her father. Our eyes met. A deadly paleness came over her countenance, and, fearing that she was about to fall, I sprang towards her, and caught her in my arms. A scene, of course, followed. The Dowager Lady Twaddle, happening to stand in the way, received a push which drove her back upon Lord Fiddlestick, who trod upon the gouty toe of Sir John Callipash, who roared aloud with agony. The company were all in motion in an instant, crowding about us like moths about a candle; and Lucy, who might perhaps have recovered the agitation produced by this un-

expected meeting, overcome with shame and terror, fainted. This was not a time to regard trifles, and Dr. Travers himself made no opposition whilst I bore her through the throng towards the stairs. My carriage was at the door; in it I placed her, and her father taking a seat on one side, whilst I sat on the other, I requested to know whither the coachman should drive. 'To Brunswick Square,' replied he. Our destination was soon reached, and Lucy had regained her senses before the carriage stopped.

"It was now for the first time that the remembrance of my last interview with the Doctor, and the peculiar circumstances under which we parted, occurred to me. As long as Lucy lay motionless upon his bosom, I could think of nothing but her; and the thoughts of her father were manifestly occupied by the same object. We never exchanged a syllable during the drive, except when he replied to my question as to the part of the town where they lodged. Now, however, I felt embarrassed and confused, as I had done when he formerly upbraided me with my intended villainy, and

forbade me his house; whilst he too appeared to have recovered his self-command sufficiently to recall images unpleasant to himself, and unfavourable to me. I offered to accompany them up-stairs into their lodgings. This the doctor prohibited. 'No, Mr. St. Clair,' said he; 'though I thank you for the attention just received, I cannot forget former occurrences. Learn to respect the feelings of others, as well as your own. Become a good member of society, as I fear you have hitherto been a bad one, and then welcome. But till then, farewell!' I slunk back into the carriage, and drove home in a state of mind utterly incapable of description.

" The sight of Lucy, particularly under existing circumstances, at once renewed the passion which I had striven during many months to smother. Like other fires which have for a time been covered over, it burst forth again with increasing violence, and all farther attempts to oppose it I felt to be useless. The contest between inclination and pride was at an end. To live without Lucy was impossible—to obtain her, it would at

least be necessary to seek her upon honourable terms. I resolved to do so. Nay, I went farther than this—I doubted whether I had not been hitherto acting upon a wrong principle, and whether it would not conduce more to my own comfort, were I in some degree to study the comfort and wishes of my neighbours. I had tried every other road to happiness without success—I determined now to make the experiment, whether I might not be made happy myself by dispensing happiness to others. With this view, a good feeling at work within me, I sat down to address the doctor. I acknowledged my past misconduct—I entreated him to forgive and forget it—I assured him of my unalterable attachment to his daughter, and my determination to make myself, if possible, worthy of her—I even went so far in the paroxysm of virtuous enthusiasm, as to beg that he would become my guide and director in all my concerns, promising to act in every matter in obedience to his wishes. Having sealed this letter, I dispatched it by my servant, and waited the result in all the misery which an im-

patient man endures whilst any thing materially affecting his future welfare hangs in doubt.

"My man returned in a couple of hours with a note from Dr. Travers. It was short, dignified, but not unkind. It expressed the satisfaction of the writer at the promises made by me, but it gave no immediate sanction to my suit. 'To conceal from you that Lucy's affections are gained, would,' continued the billet, 'be impossible; but this I am proud to say of my daughter, that she will never give her hand to any man of whom her father does not approve. In your case I am willing to believe as much as in the case of other men; but till I see some evidence that you can act as well as protest, I must still require you to abstain from visiting or holding any intercourse with my child.' I cursed the old man's suspicious temper, and tore his letter into fragments; how I refrained from rushing forth again into my former vicious habits is more than I can tell.

CHAPTER X.

THE FATALIST.

"It has been my invariable practice through life to act upon the spur of the moment, according as whim, or rather destiny, directed. I had engaged myself to dine with a party of gambling friends that day, and had resolved, when I rose in the morning, to return from the meeting either a ruined or a recovered man. Now I had neither spirit nor inclination to fulfil that engagement. On the contrary, I ordered my carriage to be got ready, and in an hour after [the] receipt of the doctor's communication, was on my way into the country. My reasoning ran thus:—

"The doctor and Lucy will, without doubt, return home as soon as she is able to travel.

I am still forbidden to call upon them; yet I know that if I remain in town I shall not be able to attend to the prohibition. But a breach of it may lead to the worst consequences; and therefore it is better, even viewing the matter thus, to fly from temptation. Again, should the doctor be informed of my sudden departure, it will doubtless act favourably for me. He will believe that my protestations were sincere, and that I really have abandoned for ever the haunts of vice, with the view of carrying my good resolutions into practice. Besides, a thousand circumstances were likely to operate in my favour in the country, which could hardly be expected to occur in town;—and let me do justice to myself, I was then serious in my design of acquiring other and better habits. Smile if you will, Sir, but it is true. I actually felt at that time remorse, deep remorse, for my past misdeeds. I was actually eager to begin my new course of living: indeed, a gentleman of your cloth, to whom in epistolary correspondence I opened my mind, assured me, that I had experienced the new birth.

"Well, I returned to the country. I found *all things as lonely and comfortless as they* had been when I left it; I determined that they should be otherwise. My first directions to the house-steward were, that a huge cauldron of good broth should be made ready every Tuesday and Saturday, and given to the poor. I caused a large portion of the village church to be new-pewed at my own expense, and presented the altar with a new covering, the desk and pulpit with new cushions. I visited the school; put my name down as a subscriber to double the amount formerly given; gave directions that each of the boys should be supplied with a cap and gaberdine, and each of the girls with a frock and bonnet, at my cost. I attended one or two parish meetings; looked narrowly into the accounts of the overseer; ordered relief (for no one presumed to contradict my wishes) to several paupers who had been previously refused, and spoke largely of the necessity under which we all lay of alleviating each other's distresses. Several poachers were brought before me as a justice of the peace: I reprimanded them severely; but as

the crime had been committed on my own lands, *I did no more. I dismissed them,* and desired that they would never poach again. In a word, the change wrought in my behaviour and notions astonished all men. I was now talked of as the good squire, as the very pattern and model of a country gentleman; all this occurred previous to the return of the rector.

" From the little which I have already said of Dr. Travers's temper and ideas, you will readily believe that he suffered me not to continue long in doubt as to the satisfaction which my present conduct gave him. He waited upon me a few days after he had resumed his parochial labours, and spoke to me more as a parent is accustomed to speak to his son, than a village pastor to his next neighbour. I was deeply affected. The perfect independence of manner—the more than independence—the decided superiority which a consciousness of rectitude always sheds over a man's external actions, shone prominently forth in the good doctor's deportment, and I felt, and acknowledged it; ay, and with little, very little of the bitterness with which I had

been accustomed to feel it in other days. We became intimate friends. My past errors were blotted out; I was admitted at all seasons to the rectory, and in three months after the commencement of my reformation, was rewarded with the hand of Lucy.

" If you or any other individual can explain whence it arose, that I was hardly put in possession of the prize for which I had so long sighed, ere it began to lose its value in my eyes, I will freely admit that men are not over-ruled in their deeds and wills by an irresistible fate. That I ever ceased to love Lucy—I say not. Far from it. I doated upon her ever, ever; I doat upon her memory now—I mean that I abhor and execrate myself for my behaviour towards her. But what then? We had been married little more than six weeks, when I began to see a thousand things in her general demeanour of which I could not approve. Sometimes she was a great deal too affectionate towards myself,—it was silly—nay it produced a suspicion that it could not be real. I checked it, and checked it rudely. At other times she was too cold and distant; I more than once caught her weeping. I hated tears, and

I told her so. Then her unwearied attention to the poor and to the schools disgusted me. I became gloomy, morose, irritable. At last I determined to return again into public life. Ambition was now the idol of my worship. I resolved to shine in Parliament; and for this purpose I bargained for a seat, as the representative of a neighbouring borough, at the trifling cost of seven thousand pounds.

"My gentle Lucy endeavoured once, and only once, to divert me from the scheme. As a matter of course, I imputed her opposition to the worst motives; and in truth, had my mind not been previously made up to the matter, the very fact of her having ventured to speak against it would have determined me. I brought my bargain to a close. To make good my stipulations, I was obliged once more to have recourse to the plan of an annuity; and as my creditor chanced to be aware that the estate was entailed, he farther insisted upon my insuring my life. For the loan of seven thousand pounds, I accordingly lessened my annual revenues by seven hundred; leaving little more than twelve hundred a year to support my new dignity.

"For some time after the commencement of my career as a senator, I was myself conscious of a change for the better, both in my habits and notions. There was some excitation continually on my mind. I desired to take a lead as a speaker; once or twice I was fortunate, and my success delighted me. But like most men in a similar situation, I permitted my vanity to carry me beyond my depth. I ventured to oppose the minister on a question which I had never studied; I gave utterance to certain common-places badly put together, and ending in nothing. The honourable gentleman who replied, turned me into utter ridicule; I reached my home in a state of insanity.

"And now I come to a detail of the blackest part in my black course. I hated the man who had thus silenced me, with the hatred of a brother who has quarrelled with his brother. Mine was not a rancour to be appeased by any thing short of the death of him who had offended me. There was not a morning of my life, part of which was not now devoted to pistol-shooting. I practised till I could split a ball upon the edge of a knife, or snuff a candle at twelve paces

distant; and as soon as I had attained this degree of perfection, I laid myself out for a quarrel. In public and in private I sought every opportunity to insult and irritate my opponent. I strove to satirize him as he had satirized me, before the House; but I was no wit, and my satire consequently degenerated into personal invective; I was called to order. Out of doors I was more successful. Though a brave man, he was exceedingly good-tempered, and either did not, or would not, see my intentions for some time. At length, however, I insulted him so grossly in the lobby of the Opera-house, that it was out of his power to pass it by; he sent me a message. I accepted his challenge; and as there was some risk of the affair getting wind, I proposed that we should settle our dispute without delay. We met at an early hour the following morning, and at the first fire I shot him through the heart.

"Was I happy after this?—by no means. Matters had been so well arranged, that though all the world knew by what hand my victim had met his death, the coroner's jury found themselves at a loss to say on whom the suspicion of

guilt should rest. As far as my immediate fortunes were concerned, therefore, I experienced from the result of the duel no inconvenience whatever; but my mind was never for an instant at rest. If ever man deliberately committed murder, I did. I prepared myself beforehand for a meeting—I studiously sought for it—and I went to attend it in the firm determination of destroying my enemy if I could. Were it possible to believe that men are free agents—were I not perfectly satisfied that we never act but as fate decrees, I should regard myself as the most guilty and cold-blooded of assassins. Nay, let me acknowledge my own inconsistency; such was the light in which I then viewed—such is the light in which I sometimes view myself still.

"From that fatal day I became more than ever a torment to myself, and to all around me. To Lucy I was absolutely cruel. We had been married upwards of a year and a half, and she brought me no child. Shall I confess it? I upbraided her for this, as if it were something blameable on her part, and yet I loved her all the while with an intensity such as few married

men experience for their wives. Amiable and gentle being! She bore my reproaches with the meekness of an angel; she wept under them, but she never complained. Her father believed to the last that she was the happiest of women, and I the best of husbands. Every thing, too, went wrong with me. I lost all interest in public business; the very gaming-table produced not sufficient excitement. I had recourse to the bottle. Among bon-vivants and jolly souls, none were now my superiors; and I reeled home, morning after morning, only to overwhelm with reproaches and abuse one who never gave me cause to reproach her, even through inadvertence.

"As a natural consequence upon the kind of life which I had led, my affairs became deeply involved. Creditors were importunate; and the very Jews refused to furnish me with money, except on terms such as even I perceived to be ruinous. At last an execution was threatened; my furniture, plate, horses, carriages, were all about to be seized. What was now to be done I neither knew nor cared.

"My wife, though the daughter of a coun-

try clergyman, was connected, both by the father and mother's side, with several families of distinction. One of her maternal uncles had held some high situation in India, and her cousin now enjoyed the fruits of his toil, which he himself never lived to enjoy. He mixed with the best circles—supported a splendid establishment—and withal was regarded, by those who new him, as a person of singularly kind heart and correct morals. Of course he visited his cousin when she appeared in the hemisphere of London as the wife of an M.P.; and as she relished his society, we saw a good deal of him. Only conceive, Sir, I became jealous, madly jealous, of that man. I contrasted his frank, open, and affectionate manner, with my own pettish and inconsistent deportment. I could not deny that the first was far more attractive than the last, and I came to the conclusion that it must be so regarded by my wife. There wanted but some decided act of friendship on his part towards Lucy to convince me, that a criminal passion subsisted between them.

"When the execution above referred to ac-

tually occurred, Lucy, worn out with irregular hours, and broken in spirit by my unkind treatment, was exceedingly ill; the effect of the seizure of our furniture was to increase her illness to an alarming degree. I was not within when the bailiffs arrived, otherwise I should have probably done some deed which might have been the means of cutting short my career, as it deserved to be cut short. The news was brought to me at a moment when my last guinea was staked upon the turn of a die. The throw was against me, so I rushed forth with the firm determination of committing suicide. First, however, I resolved to see with my own eyes how matters stood at home: for which purpose I flew towards Harley-street. I was met at my own door by Mr. Blake, Lucy's relative.

"'For God's sake go in and comfort your wife, St. Clair,' said he; 'she is very ill. I am now on my way for a physician.'

"I passed him without speaking a word. The bailiffs were gone; the furniture and effects all stood as I had left them in the morning. I believed that I was in a dream. I ran

up-stairs to my wife's apartment, and found her lying upon a sofa in violent hysterics. Her maid was attending to her as well as she could, but I desired her to leave the room, and she did so.

" 'How is this, Lucy?' said I, affecting to be calm. 'Have done with these airs, and tell me how it comes about that there are no bailiffs in the house. I thought that an execution had been going on.'

" 'And so it was,' cried she, struggling to subdue her emotions: 'We were indeed ruined; but Blake,—good, kind Blake,—discharged the debt, and we are still left in possession of our house.—Oh, Charles, I will never, never upbraid you with the past; but let us change our mode of living. How happy were we at Claremont, till——'

" ''Till what?' exclaimed I, madly; ''Till I took into my family, and to my bosom, a wretch that has dishonoured me!—Blake, Blake, eternally Blake!—He paid the debt, and how was he paid?'

" 'Charles,' replied Lucy, rising, and with dignity, 'this is the worst of all. Neglect,

harshness, cruelty, I could bear; but to hear you insinuate aught against my honour, or that of my cousin, to whom you are so deeply indebted——'

"My brain was on fire. I replied not; but struck her violently in the face with my clenched fist. She fell—a corner of the fender entered her temple—and she never moved again!

* * * * * *

"A notion very generally prevails, that insane persons, at least during the paroxysms of insanity, are ignorant of all things which pass around them. The notion is not more common than erroneous. I have been the inhabitant of a cell for six long years,—mad, raving, outrageously mad,—and there occurred not an event, either to myself or others, of which I was not perfectly aware at the time, and of which I retain not now the clearest recollection. I saw numbers of wretches, the slaves indeed of a wayward fancy, but I never saw one who felt not that he was not where he ought to be, or where nature designed him to be. For myself I had no fancy. My sole desire, it is affirmed, was to destroy all who came within my reach,

or to destroy myself.—How was this prevented? You shall know.

"Having tried every other method in vain—having torn my back with the whip—subjected me to the restraint of a strait waistcoat—chained me down for days together to my crib—and finding, as it was affirmed, that I possessed craft enough to be calm till I was released, and only till then, the tyrants vented their spleen upon me thus. I recollect the occasion well. I had been for some time fastened by a long chain, which, passing through a hole in the partition, enabled the keeper, by going into the next cell, to draw me close against the wall at pleasure. This he was in the habit of doing several times a-day, and then he lashed me till the exercise wearied his arm. If I had been violent before, such treatment of course increased my violence. I no sooner felt the chain tightened than I roared like a wild beast; and when the brute appeared, armed, as he invariably was, with a heavy cart-whip, I gnashed my teeth upon him in impotent fury. But I had my revenge. With the straw allowed me in lieu of a bed, I so stuffed the chain, that it could not be forced

through the aperture. One morning the wretch strove in vain to draw me up as usual; he failed, and trusting, I suppose, to the effect of habitual terror upon my mind, ventured to come within my reach. Ha, it was a glorious moment! I shrank up, as I had been wont to do, into the corner, for the purpose of deceiving him; he followed, brandishing his whip, and prepared to strike. One bound brought him within my clutch. Sir, I had no weapons but my hands and feet, but they were sufficient. I caught him by the hair, dashed him on his face to the ground, and then planting my knees strongly upon his shoulders, I tore his head back till the joints of the neck began to give way. Fortunately for him, the struggle had been overheard, and assistance arrived just in time to save his worthless life.

"It was in consequence of that act that a new mode of restraint was exercised upon me. An iron collar was riveted round my neck, to which was attached a massive chain, only twelve inches in length. This was again made fast to a ring in a strong iron pillar, so formed as that it could slide upwards or downwards; the pillar

itself being built into the wall, and of the height of six feet. Round my body another iron girdle of vast strength was soldered, about two inches in width, attached to which were two circular projections, one on each side, for the purpose of pinioning and restraining my arms. To keep the girdle in its place again, other bars crossed my shoulders, and were riveted to it both before and behind; whilst a couple of links connecting the collar with the shoulder-straps, and a couple of chains fastening the back-bars to the pillar,—all power of moving head, hands, and arms, was taken away from me. Thus was I kept for four whole years. I could lie down, it is true, because my trough was placed close to the wall, and the ring in the pillar being made to slide, permitted me to stoop or stand upright. But when I did lie, it was only on my back, the sharp points in the girdle effectually hindering me from resting on my sides. Nor were the miscreants contented with this. They chained my right leg to the trough, in order, as they said, to guard against violence from kicking. Standing and lying were accordingly the only changes of posture:

I could not walk, for the chain which held me to the wall measured no more than twelve inches. My garments rotted from my back, and were replaced by a blanket; my food was half-dressed lumps of beef without salt, and potatoes; and then for my amusement—music, I had music—but it was the music of damned spirits—the howls and execrations of the furious—the laugh and shriek of the idiot;—these were the only sounds to which I listened by day and by night, till my beard had grown to my chest, and the nails of my fingers were like the talons of an eagle.

"Thus was it till a change took place in the arrangement of the asylum. How it came about, I know not; but after enduring this treatment for a series of years, I was one day set at liberty, and furnished with proper clothing. Whether my mind was ever in a state of chaos, I cannot tell. There are moments when I believe it. There are others when I believe it not; perhaps it may be the case still.

"I was set free as one cured. They told me that my wife died from accidentally falling upon the fender, and that my grief for her decease

turned my brain. Poor fools! they knew not that it was I who killed her.

"My affairs had, during the period of my confinement, in some degree recovered themselves; but I was still an embarrassed man. To help me out of my embarrassments, an appointment in India was procured for me. There I have spent the last ten years, and with the mode of my return you are acquainted."

Thus ended a tale as wild and extravagant as any which I ever perused. The impression left upon my own mind was, that the poor gentleman laboured under a derangement of intellect when he compiled it. I believe it is no uncommon matter for insane persons to fancy themselves stained with a thousand crimes which they never perpetrated, and the victims of a thousand evils which they never endured; and I am strongly disposed to hold that opinion in the case of my shipwrecked guest.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SMUGGLERS.

AMONG all the youths that attended Divine service at the church of St. Alphage, there was none, at least in my day, to be compared, either in point of manly beauty or rustic accomplishments, with Will Brockman. Will was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. His father, who, to use the colloquial phraseology of this coast, had followed the sea from his childhood, perished one stormy night, in a vain though gallant attempt to bring assistance to a vessel in distress; and Will, who was then an infant, formed from that hour the only solace of a kind-hearted and amiable mother. The elder Brockman had, it appeared, been successful in his speculations. Whether these were always such as to defy scrutiny, or

whether, in common with the rest of his townsmen, he deemed it no act of dishonesty to defraud the revenue as often as circumstances would allow, I cannot tell. All that I know is, that at his death he left his widow in possession of a comfortable dwelling, situated on the extreme edge of my parish—of a sum in ready money, the amount of which no one accurately knew—of the whole and sole property in a barge and a pinnace—together with a couple of shares in a neat lugger, famous for its fast sailing, and called the Dreadnought. Possessed of this fortune, Mrs. Brockman naturally became an object of desire to such of her late husband's companions as were bachelors. The father of her boy had not been in his grave a year, before she was importuned on all hands to change her condition; but to such proposals she turned a deaf ear, and transferring to her son all the love she ever felt for her husband, she continued in her widowed state up to the hour of her decease.

At the period of which I now write, Will had attained his three-and-twentieth year; in height, he measured rather more than six feet.

His form, though apparently slender, was well knit and put together; his step was light and free, and gave notice of a surpassing degree of agility and vigour; no man along the coast could pull a better oar, or more skilfully manage a rudder or a sail, when the wind was high and the sea rough. Will's hair was of a raven blackness, and hung about his temples and forehead in thick short curls; his eye was of the hue of the sloe when it is fully ripe; his complexion was a clear olive, slightly tinged with vermilion; and his skin, notwithstanding a frequent exposure to the elements, as well in summer as in winter, still retained the purity and delicacy of its texture. Yet he was not critically beautiful. His was a countenance which pleased more because of its general expression of good-humour and high courage, than that the features were strictly regular; for his nose was perhaps too long, and his mouth rather too wide. But then his teeth were pieces of the brightest and most polished ivory, and there was a beam in his eye, and a lightening up of every feature when he smiled, which few maidens could watch with indifference. Such was Will Brockman when

first I saw him, about four years after my arrival in the parish; and I must say, that when he stood in the church-yard, in his jacket and trowsers of fine blue cloth, his white stockings and well-cleaned shoes, I could not wonder at the degree of honest pride with which his widowed mother regarded him.

The events of his short life, previous to the commencement of our acquaintance, may be related in few words.

Like other youths brought up by the seaside, Will early exhibited a predilection for a maritime life; and as Mrs. Brockman appeared to consider the coasting-trade, and the business of a dredger, as of all others the most perilous, she determined to send her son into the service of a company of merchants, whose ships navigated between London and the Baltic. At the age of thirteen he accordingly entered upon his apprenticeship. This expiring in four years, he was taken, when seventeen years old, as an able seaman on board the Neptune, where his attention to his duties, and his general activity and intelligence, soon recommended him for favour and promotion. He had hardly reached

his twentieth year, when he received the appointment of second mate;—his preferment to the rank of first mate occurred the year after. And when he and I met for the first time, he was on leave of absence of an indefinite extent, waiting till the brig Britannia should be fitted out for service, of which he was to be put in command. Right joyous had the widow's heart been many days before he made his appearance, at the prospect of once more having her boy under her roof, safe and sound from the perils of the deep. No fewer than five years had elapsed since her arms last embraced him; and now he was to return to them loaded with honours, and what was of far more weight in her eyes, worthy to be honoured by all good men. Happy woman was she, when at a late hour on Saturday night, her brave and handsome son burst into her parlour; and proud was her bearing when she entered the house of God, leaning upon his stalwort arm, on the morning after.

There dwelt in the parish at this time a family of the name of Petley, of whom, from the father down to the youngest child, no one thought

well. The old man was by trade a market-gardener, but he paid so little attention to the cultivation of his land, that it would have been matter of surprise how he contrived to live, had not his neighbours been pretty well assured, that he looked to it but little for a subsistence. He was a widower. His domestic circle consisted of three sons and a daughter, the eldest about thirty, the youngest, Harriet, hardly nineteen. The boys professed to be fishermen. They owned a boat among them, with which they made frequent voyages, no one cared to inquire whither; but if these voyages were made in search of fish, they were generally far from being successful. The fact, indeed, was, that fishing constituted a mere excuse for the prosecution of another, and a more perilous vocation. They were smugglers, daring, intrepid, unprincipled smugglers—men who were known to carry arms about their persons whenever they set out upon an adventure, and who professed, and professed truly, not to set their own lives, or the lives of others, at a pin's value. They were men of violence from their youth up, dissolute in their habits, proud and

bold in their deportment, and what, in the eyes of their neighbours at least, was worst of all, they were men without one particle of honour. No one herded with them, no one dared to trust them. They stood perfectly alone, for they had on various occasions betrayed a companion in illicit transactions, and were universally shunned in consequence.

Of the daughter, Harriet, it grieves me to speak in the terms which truth requires. Never have my eyes rested upon a female face or form more perfectly beautiful. Her brown hair hung in glossy ringlets over her neck, and parted upon a forehead purer and whiter than the purest alabaster, in which every blue vein could be distinctly traced, like streaks in the polished marble. Her eye of dark hazel could languish or laugh, as suited the humour of the moment, with equal effect; her little mouth spoke volumes, as the smile or the sneer curled it; her figure, neither tall nor short, was a piece of the most exquisite symmetry. Yet, with all these outward charms, Harriet was a bad girl; and she was not the less bad, that she was absolutely chaste. Cold, calculating,

and hypocritical, she had been taught from her childhood to square every action, and to fashion every look, according to the dictates of interest. All the lads in the parish admired her, and almost all had, for a time, dangled after her. But they gradually ceased to court one, who favoured their addresses only so far as she found them pliable; and who made no other use of her power over them, than to entangle them into a ruinous connexion with her brothers.

Young Brockman had been so long absent, that of the character of this family he knew nothing. The sons had all been his schoolfellows; one was about his own age; and when they last parted, no such stigma was known to attach to them. It was therefore but natural that he should meet their advances with the cordiality of other days, and freely accept their invitation to come and partake of the produce of the farm. This was given after Divine service, on the very first Sunday which he spent amongst us; and coming as it did, from the ruby lips of Harriet, no one could feel surprise that it was not declined; for with the precipi-

tancy of his years, Will's admiration grew at once into passion, and before he had exchanged two sentences with his old acquaintance, he became her devoted slave.

From that unlucky hour, Will became a constant visitor at the house of John Petley. His mother, from whom the state of his feelings could not long remain a secret, did her best to break off the connexion. She took, I believe, the injudicious course which most mothers take, when their sons or daughters chance to form an improper attachment; that is to say, she never neglected any legitimate opportunity of speaking slightingly of Harriet, nor greatly scrupled to invent one, when it occurred not of its own accord. But her plans proved as fruitless as such plans generally prove; and the more she railed at the object of his attentions, the more devotedly and warmly attached to that object he became. Matters went, indeed, so far at last, that she absolutely longed for the arrival of the communication which was again to separate her from the only being upon earth whom she truly loved; so firmly was she convinced, that her son's intercourse with the Petleys

could end in no good, and would probably lead to his ruin.

Nor had much time elapsed before the consequences of his misplaced attachment began to appear in the habits and behaviour of the young Brockman. Whole days were now spent at Petley's house, and some of the lowest and worst characters along the coast were his companions. Many a time his mother sat up, in expectation of his return, till long past midnight; and when he did return, was shocked to find him in a state of outrageous inebriety. His money, too, began to run short; cards, of which the good woman entertained a grievous horror, became his favourite diversion; and a rumour gradually gained ground that much of it was lost at play. When Sunday morning came round, he had always some excuse ready, why he should not accompany her to church; his head ached, or he had received a communication from his employers, which must be answered by that day's post; in a word, Will Brockman was an altered man. The very expression of his countenance was changed, and even his style of dress was no longer what it used to be. The effect of all

this was, to cause the widow's heart, of late so light, to sink within her; her days were accordingly devoted to useless complaining, and her nights to watchfulness and terror.

In the mean while, a thousand stories were abroad respecting her son. His letter of appointment, it was reported, had arrived; but he had rejected the situation, at the suggestion of Harriet and her brothers. He had been frequently seen, of late, at the dead of night, on the beach; and more than once he was known to have been absent from home for twenty-four hours successively. The Dreadnought, which had hitherto been navigated by a stranger, was called in, and who was to command her, or in what service she was hereafter to be employed, no one knew. Men whispered and smiled, women looked grave, and lamented,—and all felt persuaded, that Will Brockman was entangled in a net from which he would never free himself. Not that the good folks on the coast of Kent look with an evil eye upon an ordinary smuggler,—very far from it; I believe that not a few of the leading families in that part of the kingdom, owe their rise entirely to what is

called *free trade:* but the party with which Will had connected himself, or was supposed to have connected himself, were so notoriously bad, that their very brother smugglers dared not trust them. Even of the little honour which belongs to thieves, they were known to be devoid; and hence Brockman's ruin was predicted, not so much on account of the danger necessarily attendant upon his pursuits, as because it was surmised, that his new associates would deliver him over to the officers of Government, on the very first opportunity which should promise to make it worth their while.

Of all this his poor mother was duly informed. Her fears were accordingly excited beyond endurance, and the more, that she knew not how to proceed in order to save him. The effect of her personal remonstrances had been to drive him almost entirely from his home. The spell of the syren was over him, and to her he fled for comfort and support when the reproaches and tears of a kind parent stung too deeply. This the latter saw, and, determined to risk every thing for his preservation, she fell

upon a remedy so desperate as only to be justified by the desperate state of his circumstances. She resolved to become herself an informer—she made up her mind to instruct the Excise officers when and where they might arrest the Petleys in their illicit proceedings, and she delayed it from day to day, only in the hope, the remote and uncertain hope, of finding an opportunity to do so when Will might be absent from their meetings; but that opportunity came not—day and night they were together, and the poor woman, worked up to a pitch of frenzy, at last gave information of an intended landing of smuggled goods, in which she had somehow discovered that Will was to take part. The goods were, indeed, to be brought over in the Dreadnought, which her son was to steer; yet, such was her horror of the proceedings in which he had embarked, and such the conviction, that if she did not extricate him by a desperate chance like the present, he would undoubtedly fall a victim to the interests of his more crafty comrades, that without hesitation she dispatched an anonymous letter to the Custom-house, in which the

plans of the smugglers were, as far as she knew them, communicated. The letter was not cast aside because it bore no signature; and what the consequences of it were, it shall be the business of the following chapter to detail.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SMUGGLERS.

It was now the month of August; I had retired to bed one night at my usual hour, but, partly from the effect of delicate health, and partly because my thoughts were still too apt to wander back into past scenes, I felt no inclination to sleep. After vainly tossing about for some time, I rose, and, opening the window, looked out. The air was soft and mild, and the moon, in her third quarter, shed a faint and silvery light over external objects. My little church, with its neat church-yard and white fences, appeared to peculiar advantage beneath her rays; the sides of the green hills, and the bosom of the green valley before me, glittered in the dew-drops, and the sheep either lay in groups here and there, or rousing at intervals

by ones and twos, sent forth a short bleating, as if in search of some strayed companions. The roar of the waves, as they broke upon the distant shingle, came upon me like notes of the sweetest music. Of the sea itself I saw nothing, for the hill on the right of the Vicarage completely shuts it out; but its sound floated up upon the breeze, even more audibly and more harmoniously than was usual. In all still nights we hear that sound, the most delightful perhaps of any which inanimate nature produces; but to-night it was more constant, and more exquisitely soothing, than I had ever heard it. The consequence was, that I felt more than ordinarily affected by it. The images which had occupied my mind before I rose, were melancholy, and painfully so; they lost much of their agonizing character, after I seated myself beside the open window. "Why should I complain?" said I; "it is doubtless far better thus, than it would have been had my wishes been accomplished. She is at rest—perhaps she is a blessed spirit, inhabiting that bright planet which is sailing over head, and looking down with pity upon me because I am still tied to the

earth. At all events, it was the will of Him who knows what is best for us, to remove her; and to that will I submit."

Such was the train of my thoughts, and such the calm and holy state into which I was fast falling, when a considerable commotion at the base of the hill on the right hand attracted my attention. A deep shadow was over the spot, which hindered me from seeing any thing; but I heard the tread of men's feet, and the noise of sheep starting from their lairs; and the latter soon ran out, as if scared, into the moonlight. I kept my eye steadily fixed upon the obscure corner, which I knew to be the gorge of a ravine or gulley in the hill side, and listened with an anxiety quite disproportionate to the apparent cause, for any other sounds which might proceed from it. Nor did I long listen in vain. The ravine was but a very short distance from the paddock fence; and as the slight air that stirred, blew inwards, I had no difficulty in catching the substance of the following dialogue, though it was conducted with apparent caution, and in no higher tone than a whisper.

"Is it the time yet?" said one voice.

"Not quite, I think," replied another.

"It was one o'clock they said, was it not?"

"Yes, and it cannot be far from that now—it struck twelve before we left the town."

"Hush!" whispered the first speaker, "did you not hear something?"

There was a silence of several seconds after this, but the alarm appeared to be groundless, and the conversation was renewed.

"A great pity! a fine lad, but grown devilish wild. Well, well, it will be a good haul for us—but will they fight, think ye?"

"Can't say. I have got my bull-dogs though, and curse me if I don't use them. There they come, by Jove!—let us mount!"

At this moment, another sound caught my ear, as of persons approaching the summit of the hill from the opposite side, and walking with difficulty. I looked up, and the figures of three men, each bearing a burthen upon his back, stood between me and the moon. They paused for a moment, and as far as I could judge from their motions, looked anxiously round, then throwing down their loads upon

the ground, they seated themselves beside them. Having continued thus for about five minutes, they again resumed their burthens, and began to descend. They had proceeded about half-way, when two men sprang from the shadowy ravine, by the edge of which they were walking, and made towards them. Instantly their sacks were cast from them, and the three figures fled in different directions, unpursued, however, by the assailants, who occupied themselves in gathering together the plunder. I now saw how the case stood. Without doubt the three were smugglers, and the two, officers of the revenue; and the matter being one in which I was not anxious to be involved, I gently closed my window and retired to bed.

I had dropped into a doze, but how long I had lain thus I know not, when sleep was suddenly dispelled by the report of fire-arms. A shout followed, and then a loud shriek, as if from one in pain or deadly peril. I leaped out of bed again, and looking towards the place where the seizure was effected, I saw a group of three persons, one lying at length upon the ground, and two standing over him—a fourth

man was farther up the hill, and was descending. Though they were too far removed for me to distinguish their words, it was evident that the last-mentioned person no sooner joined the rest, than a violent altercation began. What the subject of it might be, I could not tell; but it ended at length in their lifting the form which lay upon the ground, and casting it over the ravine. A horrible conviction now flashed across my mind. Murder had been committed —the murder, no doubt, of an exciseman, and these were the persons who had shed his blood. I felt a chill creep through my veins, and drew in my head to recover; when I looked out again, the figures had all disappeared.

It will easily be imagined, that the night passed by without any refreshing sleep visiting my pillow. I lay wide awake, indeed, till day-break, a prey to the most agonizing and fearful surmises. There was no positive ground for the suspicion; at least nothing had occurred capable of creating more than suspicion; yet I could not divest myself of the persuasion, that young Brockman was somehow or other implicated in the business. Connected with this

idea, also, was the recollection of the measure so frequently threatened by his mother; and these combined, served to conjure up phantoms more hideous and alarming than any which had ever before taken possession of my brain. As the best and only means of dispelling them, I resolved at last to disbelieve the evidence of my own senses; and by a positive effort, succeeded in doubting whether the whole scene might not have been, after all, a mere creation of my own fancy.

Such a doubt could not, however, be permitted to continue unsolved. Daylight having at length arrived, I hastily dressed myself, and proceeded towards the spot where I had seen, or fancied that I had seen, the deed of violence done. There were abundant confirmations there of my worst fears. The grass was torn, as if by the hands and heels of men struggling, and in various places it was dyed with blood. There was a sprinkling of the same foul stream as far as the edge of the precipice, and there it ended. The gulley in question measures about one hundred and fifty feet in depth; it is as nearly perpendicular as can be, and a narrow foot-

path, or rather a sheep-track, winds just under its ridge. At the bottom stands a ruined cottage, with a heap of loose stones, all overgrown with nettles and other rank weeds. I could perceive that they had been lately disturbed, for the weeds were trodden down, and of the stones, a more than usual quantity were laid bare; and the thought immediately occurred, that there they had deposited the body: I could not suffer the fact to continue undecided, so I descended the hill again, and made for the ruin.

I had no difficulty in reaching the parallel of the high ground from which I had looked down, for a horrible mark guided me. There were clots and dashes of blood along the entire face of the ravine, and at its base a pool had coagulated where the body had doubtless rested from its fall. I pursued a sort of track among the nettles, which conducted from this point as far as the corner of the dilapidated gable, where it ended. Here it was manifest that a number of stones had lately been removed; and on rolling back several of them again, an horrible spectacle met my eyes. A dead man lay beneath

them. His throat was cut from ear to ear, and a knife, such as sailors generally carry, lay beside him. It was covered with gore, both handle and blade, and it was marked upon the former with the initials W. B. "O God!" cried I, aloud, "then Will Brockman is the murderer!"

The exclamation was hardly uttered, when I found myself suddenly surrounded by a concourse of people, among whom were several peace-officers, and a magistrate. The agitation necessarily produced by being caught under circumstances so extraordinary, having passed away, I repeated to the latter all that I had heard and seen on the preceding night; and having likewise communicated my suspicions respecting the perpetrators of the deed, constables were immediately dispatched to secure the parties named. In the mean while, the body was removed to the vestry, to await the issue of an inquest; and the magistrate returned with me to the Vicarage, where we spent the time in no very enviable state of feeling, till the officers with their prisoners should arrive.

Nearly two hours elapsed before the latter

event occurred. They came, however, at last, bringing with them the three brothers and their companion; nor could the most careless spectator fail to observe the striking contrast which the appearance and manner of these unhappy persons presented.

In the demeanour of the first were exhibited hardly any symptoms of alarm, certainly none of confusion or dismay. An occasional flush would, indeed, pass over their countenances as the examination proceeded; but, with this exception, theirs was the expression of men either absolutely innocent, or to a terrible degree callous and hardened. Not such was the expression of Brockman's face. Misery, the deepest and the darkest, was pictured there. He was deadly pale; his eye was wild and blood-shot, and either rested steadily upon the floor, or wandered in seeming unconsciousness round the room. Nor was the difference in their dress less remarkable. The brothers had been arrested in bed. They rose, coolly and calmly put on clean apparel, and acted in every way as if they were utterly ignorant of all cause for their arrest. Brockman had been taken upon

the beach. He wore the same garments which he must have worn on the preceding night, and they, as well as his hands, were red with blood. When the officers overtook him, he was pacing backwards and forwards, more like one who meditates self-destruction than escape; and he now stood before us as manifestly stamped with the crime of which he was accused, as external appearances could stamp him. Even I could not but acknowledge to myself, that he must be the murderer.

The magistrate, having seated himself in due form beside the table, proceeded to take the depositions of such as appeared in any respect acquainted with the circumstances of the case. For my own part, I could only repeat what I had previously communicated, avowing, at the same time, my ignorance of the persons of those concerned; and the next individual examined brought not the matter greatly more home to the prisoners. This witness proved to be the companion of the murdered man. He deposed to the receipt of an anonymous communication, in consequence of which he and his companion had acted; and described minutely the fact of

their ambush, and consequent seizure. The goods seized were, however, too bulky to be removed without farther assistance, when it became necessary for one to go in search of such assistance, whilst the other kept guard over the prize; and the former duty falling to his share, he left the deceased to discharge the latter. The only thing which at all bore upon the charge, was his assertion, that, being on his way to Folkestone, he met, on the opposite side of the hill, a man whom he recognised as the elder Petley, but who merely wished him good night, and passed on.

Witness farther deposed, that

He might have been absent from his companion about an hour; for that the inhabitants of Folkestone being asleep, he found it difficult to procure the necessary aid. Having procured it, however, he hastened back, and discovered, to his dismay, that neither his brother officer nor the smuggled goods were in the place where he had left them. He then went on to state, that, alarmed at so unexpected an occurrence, he and his party began to inspect the ground for marks of violence, which it prognosticated.

In this search a pistol was found, which appeared to have been lately discharged, and which, on examination, he could not recognise as having belonged to his companion. Next, a quantity of blood was discovered, as well as the trace as if a body had been dragged along the grass to the edge of the cliff. Being now fully satisfied that a deed of violence had been committed, they agreed to give information to the nearest magistrate, and accordingly proceeded to the house of his worship, who promptly rendered them all the assistance in his power, and to whom the rest of the proceedings were known.

The testimony of the last witness being taken down, and signed, it was fully corroborated by the evidence of certain persons who accompanied him from Folkestone for the purpose of securing the captured goods. No more, therefore, was necessary to make out a case against the prisoners, than to identify the weapons found upon the spot as their property. With respect to the knife, no proof could be more distinct. Many persons swore to their having observed it in the possession of Brockman, and

the letters engraved upon the haft rendered their assertions additionally credible; but of the connexion of the pistol with the three brothers, the proof was not, perhaps, so decisive. The four prisoners were, however, known to be on an intimate footing; they had been seen together on the night previous to the murder, when they set sail for the coast of France, with the avowed intention of bringing over a cargo of contraband articles, and no one could testify to the time of their return. Such was the chain of evidence against them, and upon it the magistrate conceived that he was bound to detain them.

There remained yet one source of information, of which no use had been made,—namely, the anonymous letter. His worship, having ascertained that the officer was in possession of that letter, desired that it might be given up to him, as a probable means of throwing additional light on the mysterious affair. This was done, and on his handing it to me, under the idea that I perhaps might know something of the characters, I discovered at the first glance a perfect confirmation of all my fears. The hand-

writing was that of Mrs. Brockman, and the billet itself ran thus—"One who is anxious to save an infatuated youth from ruin, begs to inform the Commissioners, that about midnight on the fifteenth of this month, a boat will land below Folkestone, loaded with silks and lace. It is surmised that the boat's crew consists of four persons, and that the goods will be conveyed across the hill to the house of John Petley."

My very breath forsook me when I had finished the perusal of this note, and I looked at Brockman with even more of deep commiseration than I had previously experienced. His guilt I dared not excuse; but he seemed at the moment like Hercules in the Trachiniæ of Sophocles, about to perish by the well-intended stratagem of her who loved him above all created beings. Whether he entertained any suspicion of the fact, I know not, for he paid no regard whatever to passing events. Not even when, like the rest, he was called upon to deny or confess his crime, did he utter one word; for whilst they were protesting their innocence, he stood speechless. A clear case was accordingly ad-

judged to be made out against him, and a case little less clear against his companions, for whose committal a warrant was made out; and they were delivered over to the constables to be removed to prison.

The magistrate had just signed the deed, when the door burst open, and the unfortunate mother of Brockman rushed into the parlour. Her scream was so shrill and so appalling, that one who stood at the far-end of the glen might have heard it. "Oh, what have I done?" cried she; "and what have you done, my unfortunate boy? Why stand you here, my son, and what blood is that upon your face?—He is innocent, Sir," continued she wildly, turning to the magistrate, "quite innocent. He commit murder! he whom I reared so gently, and who was ever so gentle to me, ever, ever till——Oh! but we will not refer to that. It is done now—it is all over—the connexion is broken off, and he will go back to be again the comfort of his widowed mother.—Will you not, William, will you not return with me, my boy? Come, come," cried she, running up to him, and seizing him by the hand.

Brockman groaned audibly. It was the first sound which he had uttered since he was brought into the house, and it came from the very bottom of his heart. "I cannot go with you now, my mother," said he; "I must go elsewhere—to prison, and then to death."—"To prison, and to death!" shrieked she: "to prison, say you?—to prison, and to death too!—you? No, no, it cannot be. It was not for that I did it; it was not against you that I informed; it was against them; these bloody, heartless, godless monsters—these, who have betrayed you! O may a mother's curse blight and wither them!" "Hush, hush, my mother," replied the criminal; "curse no one,—or if you curse at all, curse me.—Now I am ready," added he, turning to the constable.

Both the magistrate and myself were too much affected by this scene to be able to interrupt it, nor was it without evident emotion that the very constable proceeded to put on the handcuffs. In effecting this, it was seen, for the first time, that Brockman's right hand was severely wounded. A deep gash, or stab, was upon its palm, from which blood still continued

to flow. "How came that wound there?" asked I, full of hope that the young man's answer might give a favourable turn to his case. But he answered not. He held up his wrists for the manacles, as if no such question had been put, and seemed to surrender himself wholly to despair. It was not so with his companions. They protested vehemently that no case had been made out against them, and that they were sacrificed to the prejudices of their neighbours; but the magistrate continuing of a different persuasion, they too were compelled to submit.

"You shall not remove him!" cried the unhappy mother, wildly rushing between the party and the door. "Friends, neighbours, oh, help, help! they will murder my boy, and his blood will be upon my head! Mr. Williams, will you not save him? He is innocent—innocent as the child unborn.—O God, I am forsaken, thou hast forsaken the widow in her afflictions! — Oh, save him, save him!"

Though exceedingly reluctant to use violence towards one whom all sincerely pitied, the

officers were at length obliged to remove her forcibly from her position. In vain she struggled and shrieked to be set free. The procession moved on, and the unhappy parent, overcome by the violence of her emotions, ceased for a time to be conscious of her misery.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SMUGGLERS.

As may readily be imagined, the events recorded in the last chapter created a powerful sensation among all classes of people in the neighbourhood. Little else, indeed, was talked of for several days after the arrest of the prisoners; and all united in sentiments of commiseration, as well for Brockman, who was universally esteemed to have fallen a victim to the wiles of his associates, as for his ill-fated mother. Nor was the latter less deserving of pity than the former. Her grief knew no bounds; and the reflection, that all had been brought about, in a great measure, through her own rashness, infused a degree of bitterness into her sorrow, not necessarily an ingredient there.

The crime having been committed beyond the jurisdiction of the Cinque Ports, no choice

was left to the magistrate, except to forward the guilty associates to Maidstone. Thither they were accordingly sent, to await the arrival of the Circuit Court; and thither, at the earnest entreaty of Mrs. Brockman, I repaired shortly after, with the design of offering such consolation to her son as he might be capable of receiving, and inquiring, at a moment of calmness, into the real state of the case. For though appearances were so strongly against him, a belief was everywhere prevalent, that of the more heinous crime he must be innocent; at all events, as it was pretty clear that one of the parties would be admitted to give evidence, in order fully to convict the rest, something, at least, would be gained, could he be prevailed upon to stand forward in that capacity.

With these plans in my head, I proceeded at the hour of four one morning to take my place in the stage. It was still quite dark, consequently I could make nothing farther of my fellow-passengers, except to discover, by means of the sense of touch, that they were three in number. A female sat next me, and two men opposite. For the first five or ten minutes, no

one spoke a word; but at the end of that time, a dialogue began between the two men, in which I could not but take a very lively interest. It struck me, at the time, as having reference to the business on which I was engaged, and I found afterwards that my surmises had not been ill-founded.

"We must not lose heart," said he whose knees rubbed against mine; "all will yet be well. It is a bad business, no doubt, but where is the use of being down-hearted?"

"It all comes of your infernal stupidity," was the reply. "You knew what was going to happen, and you might have hindered it. What had you to do sending such fellows about it, and sending them, too, so d——d exact to their time? Were the boys but out of the scrape, I should be right glad the fool got paid off for his meddling."

"Nay," rejoined the speaker, "it was no fault of mine. I had not the choice of the men, nor the direction of their movements. It was rather the fault of that hot-headed fellow, Ned—he is so confounded ready with his hands."

"Well, well—we need not quarrel about it; the thing is to get them off if we can.—We may depend upon you, I suppose?"

"Certainly, provided we succeed in muzzling the young one."

"Never fear for that; leave that to us."

The conversation ended here, and was not resumed; for one of the speakers happening to put a question to me, which I answered, the tone of my voice appeared to produce a strong effect upon the whole party. A private signal passed between them; and the female, as well as the more remote of the two men, wrapped themselves closely up, and were silent. When day dawned, therefore, I could not discover a feature of their faces; and those of the third person, though not so well concealed, were not sufficiently familiar to be recognized.

We reached Maidstone in such time as to allow my paying a short visit to my parishioner that day. I found him, as I had expected to find him, utterly and fearfully dejected. For his life, he protested that he had no regard; but his character was gone for ever, and the distress of his poor mother affected him not

less than any part of his misfortunes. At first, indeed, his manner was that of a man thoroughly reckless. He would hardly enter upon the subject of the murder at all; and he positively refused to come forward, should such a measure be proposed, as a witness against his associates.

"No, Sir," said he, "my name is black enough already, but never shall it be said that those who were my companions, suffered through my treachery."

Of course, I did my best to overcome this absurd resolution, but my efforts were fruitless, and the hour of locking up being at hand, I was compelled to desist.

In returning along the passage, I was startled by the appearance of old Petley and his daughter, as they issued from one of the cells. The whole truth now flashed upon me. The voice which had sounded so familiar in my ears during the progress of my journey hither, was that of the smuggler, and the caution with which my fellow-travellers had concealed their features, was explained. Not that there either was or could be the slightest impropriety in their using every fair and legitimate means for the deliverance of

their own relatives from trouble; but I knew them too well not to be aware, that they would not confine themselves to fair means; and I had seen too many proofs of the girl's absolute control over Brockman, not to apprehend, that it might be so managed as to cause his destruction. I accordingly returned to my inn, more than ever alarmed for the fate of the young man.

Nor were my fears groundless. I visited him again on the day following, only to find him more than ever fixed in his unwise determination. The syren had cast her spell over him; and a resolution, grounded upon false notions of honour, received ten-fold strength from her persuasive blandishments.

"All will be well," said he. "They cannot, and I will not disclose any thing; and without some declaration on our parts, what evidence is against us? And should the contrary happen, my mind is firmly made up; I will never become an informer."

It was vain to reason farther with one so completely infatuated, so I quitted the place with a heavy heart.

Of the manner in which he conducted himself

during the fortnight which intervened between my last visit and the arrival of the judges, I know nothing. His mother, I learned, who spent the interval in a lodging at Maidstone, failed, as I had failed, in inducing him to save his life by speaking what he knew; and the official offer made by the Sheriff was rejected. Not even when assured that one of the brothers stood ready to accept the mercy which he despised, could he be persuaded to alter his mind; and hence, when I returned, as I was obliged to return, to give testimony on his trial, his prospects were not in the most remote degree ameliorated. On the contrary, though much of the fierce and desperate character which marked his former demeanour had departed, yet on the single point of becoming King's evidence, he was still as resolute as before, praying "that Heaven would abandon him in his hour of greatest need, whenever he abandoned that determination." This was readily accounted for. Not a day passed by without his receiving a visit from Harriet, and not an interview occurred, during which he was not reminded of his promise, and urged to keep it.

At length the period of the assizes came round; and the Judges having gone in procession to hear Divine service, opened the Court in proper form for the conduct of public business.—The first day, as usually happens, was spent chiefly in the arrangement of preliminary matters; the juries were called together, the charge delivered, and bills of indictment brought forward. On the second day, the cause of the smugglers came on. It is probably needless to observe, that a trial for murder, under any circumstances, never fails to excite a great degree of attention; but in the case to be tried to-day, there were features of more than ordinary atrocity, and the interest taken in it by the public was fully evinced by the multitudes which surrounded the Court-house from an early hour in the morning. No sooner were the doors opened, than every bench and corner was crowded to suffocation, whilst all who filled them bore upon their countenances an expression of the deepest and most painful anxiety. For a rumour of Will's behaviour had, by some means or other, got abroad, and hence all descriptions of people appeared

to interest their feelings in his behalf; indeed, there were not wanting several respectable persons, who volunteered such advice and assistance as they had it in their power to offer. At the suggestion of one of these, Mrs. Brockman had taken care, in addition to the lawyers employed for the prisoners generally, to engage a counsel expressly for her son, whose reputation stood high, and who certainly merited, in the present instance, all the praise which could be heaped upon him.

Such was the state of affairs, when, in obedience to a message from the Court, I entered the hall, and took my place among the gentlemen of the bar. For the first minute or two after I was seated, my brain swam round, and my eyes danced in their sockets, so that I could distinguish nothing with accuracy. A dense mass of objects floated before me,—and a hum, like that of bees on a summer's evening, rang in my ears; but I saw no separate man, nor heard any separate or articulate sound. By and by, however, my self-command returned, and I looked towards the dock:—it was a terrible vision. There stood the widow's son,

handcuffed, and bound with chains, between two of his ferocious comrades. Apart from the rest stood the third, not chained, however, like them; but, as it seemed, ready to step from the dock to the witness-box. I closed my eyes involuntarily, and, I fear, cursed him in my heart.

And now, silence being proclaimed, the murmur of conversation ceased, and you might have heard a pin drop to the ground, whilst the proper officer proceeded to read the indictment.. It accused Zachariah Petley, Thomas Petley, Edward Petley, and William Brockman, of having, during the night of the 15th of August last past, at a certain place within the parish of St. Alphage, in the county of Kent, feloniously, and with malice prepense, killed and slain Robert Sharp, an officer of his Majesty's Customs, when in the performance of his duty. A second count charged the prisoners with an attempt to defraud the revenue by running and importing contraband goods. All against the peace of his Majesty the King. "Zachariah Petley," continued the officer, "are you guilty, or not guilty?" — "Not

guilty, my lord."—"Thomas Petley, are you guilty, or not guilty?"—"Not guilty."—"Edward Petley, are you guilty?"—"Not guilty, my lord."—"William Brockman, are you guilty, or not guilty?"—"Guilty of the second count, but not guilty of the first."

"Not guilty of the first!" shrieked a female voice from one of the galleries. "Not guilty of murder; hear ye that, my lord! My boy is not guilty,—Oh let him go, let him go!"

Not a sound was in the Court, save the voice of the speaker; and so perfectly electrified were all present by the tone in which these words were uttered, that no one sought to interrupt her. I looked up towards the place from whence the shriek came, and there stood the miserable widow in the very front of the gallery, with hands clasped, and arms uplifted, staring upon the spot occupied by her son. Her dress was all disordered; her cap, pushed partly off her head, permitted her hair, now slightly tinged with grey, to hang wild about her shoulders; and her large dark eyes were motionless, as if they had no power to move, and all earthly objects, except one, were shut

out from them. The Judge had, however, by this time recovered from his surprise. "My good woman," said he, "you must keep silence; and I advise you to withdraw."

"I will,—I will," cried she; "but hear ye not his declaration? and I will swear to its truth, and so will Mr. Williams."

"This must not be," rejoined the Judge. "Constables, do your duty, and keep order in the Court." But even the constables were tender to her; they only besought her to be quiet. She sat down, and the business proceeded.

"By the lenity of the Court, and at the request of the Board of Excise," said the counsel for the prosecution, "Thomas Petley is permitted to give evidence in this case. We therefore withdraw our plea against him." The Judge hereupon charged the Jury; and a verdict of not guilty on both counts being returned, the approver quitted the dock.

It were needless to go minutely through the several parts of the trial, and to repeat my own evidence, or that of the rest, who knew no more to-day than they had known when the prisoners

were first committed. The counsel for the defence did what men could do to puzzle and confound us. He whom we had retained for Brockman, in particular, exercised a degree of ingenuity which perfectly astonished me; and he put several questions to myself with the design of eliciting from my replies that Brockman, at all events, could not be implicated in the more serious offence. "I think you mentioned, Sir," said he, "that, after the shots were fired, and the shriek uttered, you saw only two men beside the body, whilst one was descending the hill towards the group—Was he who was descending, a tall man, or a little man?"—"As far as I could judge, a tall man."

"Now, look at the three prisoners at the bar, and at the witness who has lately quitted it, and tell me which of them comes nearest in height to the recollection you have of that man."

I looked round. Brockman was full two inches taller than any of them; yet I dared not swear that it was he. I hesitated for a moment. "We do not wish you to say which of these persons was really the man; for as

yet, we take it for granted that he is not present; but, supposing these to be the people implicated, which should you imagine to have been that man?"

To the question thus put, an objection was raised by the counsel on the opposite side; but the objection was overruled. "As you now address me," answered I, "I should say that William Brockman's height corresponds most nearly with that of the person alluded to."

"God bless you, Sir!" again exclaimed the unhappy mother; but she was immediately silenced. The rest of the evidence being now disposed of, Thomas Petley mounted the witness-box, and was solemnly sworn. He promised to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and prayed God to help him as he kept that promise; he gave a minute and circumstantial detail, of which the following may be taken as an accurate abbreviation.

He admitted that they were all four engaged in a smuggling expedition. He related the circumstance of the seizure as it had been described by the exciseman and myself; and of

the flight of those who carried the goods. These were, his brother Edward, William Brockman, and himself. "As to Zachariah," said he, "we left him in charge of the boat, and he never joined us till all was over." When the witness uttered this, Brockman turned round in the dock, and stared him full in the face. A sort of flush passed over his cheeks, but he was no ways farther embarrassed, and went on. "Though we fled at first in different directions, we all three met in a hollow about a stone's throw to the right, and here entered into a consultation as to what was to be done. 'Done,' cried Brockman, who had drunk rather too freely, 'what should be done? You have pistols, I have a knife; there are three to two;—let us recover the goods. To this we objected; but he snatched a pistol from my belt, and swore if we feared to join him he would go alone. He set off accordingly. we followed, with the sole view of preventing fatal consequences; but before we could overtake him he and the deceased had exchanged shots. The deceased was wounded and fled; but Brockman pursued him, seized him like

a tiger, threw him, and just as we reached him, had succeeded in cutting his throat. I wrested the knife from his grasp, and in the struggle wounded him. We were all about the body, uncertain how to dispose of it, when my brother arrived. He mentioned having met the other exciseman, and assured us all Folkestone would be a-foot directly; so we cast the body from the cliff, and then we thought of escaping. But it seemed better to hide it first. We accordingly descended the glen, and buried it under the stones where it was found."

Whilst this person's evidence was delivered, men seemed to hold their very breath with anxiety; now that it came to a close, a long sob or sigh ran through the Court. A fearful stillness followed it, and every eye was turned upon Brockman. The unfortunate youth, up to this moment, had hung down his head, as if in shame; he now raised it proudly, and looked calmly and resolutely round. "My Lord," said he slowly, and with great firmness, "the last witness has uttered a tissue of lies. I have sworn not to betray the guilty, but I am not he."

"Prisoner, you must be silent," replied the Judge; "you are in the hands of counsel."

The cross-examination which the approver endured, was indeed enough to cause an ordinary person, even when speaking the truth, to fall into a thousand contradictions. He was asked how the knife came into the grave, but he could not tell; he was questioned as to the reason why Brockman, if so desperate a character, wore no pistols of his own? For that he could not account. But in the main points of his story no contrariety appeared; and though required to tell it again and again, he invariably told it in the same words. It was well got up; no doubt it had been well prepared beforehand. Our counsel at length sat down in despair, leaving the case to the jury.

And now the Judge summed up. He went over the chief heads of evidence with the strictest impartiality, charging the Jury as that evidence required. He entreated them, if they had any doubts upon their minds, to give the prisoners the full benefit of these doubts; "but the testimony of the last witness," continued his Lordship, "is so clear, and so decided,

that, in my opinion, you have but one duty to perform. It is a painful one; but the laws of God and of your country require it. And now you may withdraw to consider the verdict."

The Jury did not withdraw, but consulted together for perhaps ten minutes, in their box. During that interval, the Court was as still, except when its stillness was interrupted by their whispers, as if life had departed from all within it. Once, and once only, the chain upon Brockman's legs rattled, as he resumed his former position; and the sound went to my heart like that of his death-knell. I looked at him. He was pale, pale as a corpse, but it was not the paleness of guilt; for not a nerve shook, nor did a muscle involuntarily quiver. At last the foreman addressed the Judge, and told him that they had made up their minds.

"And what is your verdict, gentlemen of the Jury?"

"That Zachariah Petley and Edward Petley are not guilty on the first count, but guilty on the second; that William Brockman is guilty on both."

"He is not guilty!" again shrieked out his

mother, as she wildly rose from her seat. "Oh, mercy, mercy, my Lord Judge! spare the life of the widow's son—her guiltless, excellent son! Oh, mercy, mercy!"—She could utter no more. Her senses forsook her, and she was carried in that state from the Court.

Brockman heard the verdict unmoved. He made a spring forward when his mother fainted, as if to support her, and seemed to curse the chains which kept him back; but he recovered his self-command again, as soon as she had been borne out, and calmly awaited his sentence. For myself, I started up, and heedless of forms, implored the Judge to spare him, pledging my credit that he could not be guilty, and that his bare assertion was infinitely more to be relied upon than the oath of the person on whose testimony he had been convicted. The Judge, who was a mild man, heard me out, but he could not receive my testimony. "You may employ these arguments," said he, "in a petition to the throne, which I shall certainly forward, if you present it. But I must tell you plainly, that I see no grounds on which any petition can be got up; far less can it be ex-

pected to avail in saving the life of a man convicted, as the prisoner has been convicted, of murder."

I could do no more, so I sat down in a state of utter despondency, to watch the conclusion of the scene. "Zachariah and Edward Petley," said his Lordship, addressing himself to the dock, "you have both been convicted of violating the laws of your country, by defrauding his Majesty's revenue. What makes the crime in your case more heinous is, that you appear to have carried fire-arms about your persons when engaged in your nefarious occupation; and in what way those arms were meant to be used, is hardly to be considered a question. The immediate consequence of your being armed, indeed, has been, that the life of a fellow-creature has been sacrificed; and though he died not immediately by your hands, you can hardly be acquitted by your own consciences of some share in the blame attaching to his murder. Taking all these matters into consideration, the sentence of the Court is, that you, Zachariah, be transported beyond seas for the term of seven years, whilst

you, Edward, be transported for the term of your natural life.—And now, William Brockman," continued the Judge, whilst at the same time he put on the black cap, "a more distressing task awaits me with respect to you. Of your character previous to this business the Court knows nothing, and can know nothing officially; but it has been said of you, that the time is not very remote when you were accounted a credit to yourself and to your connexions. I would to God you had always continued such; for then the painful duty would not have been imposed upon me, of passing upon you the last dreadful sentence which the law awards. In your case, the sentence of the Court is, that you be taken from the place where you stand to the gaol, and from thence to the place of execution, and that you be hanged by the neck till you be dead, and your body given for dissection; and may God have mercy on your soul! I can hold out to you no hope of mercy from man, and therefore advise you to make your peace with Heaven. But as your friends seem anxious to petition the throne in your favour,

I will appoint as distant a day for your execution as is consistent with propriety. You shall suffer on Wednesday next."

Whilst others sat as if frozen with horror, Brockman alone seemed calm and unruffled. "My Lord," said he, "I thank you for your good-will, but I have no hope that it will avail me. Indeed, I hardly desire it. My character is blasted, and I have no wish to survive it; but I am innocent,—innocent of the crime laid to my charge. I have been led astray by a misplaced passion, and betrayed by false friends. The man who did the deed stands here," laying his hand upon the shoulder of Edward Petley, who absolutely shrank beneath his touch. "And there," pointing to Thomas, "is he who aided him. This wound," holding up his right hand, "I received in striving to protect the man, whom one brother had smitten down, from the fury of the other; and as to the knife found in the grave, it is thus accounted for. We exchanged knives whilst at sea; and here is that for which I bartered mine. But it matters not, I shall suffer; and as I hope to be forgiven when I

stand before the throne of my Maker, so do I freely forgive my murderers."

It is impossible to describe the effect produced by this speech, and by the holding up of a seaman's knife in the hand of the prisoner, bearing the initials E. P. "He is innocent!" exclaimed the bar, one and all; "the man is sacrificed."—"Silence, gentlemen," cried the Judge; "let the prisoners be removed." They were removed accordingly, and I stayed not long behind them.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SMUGGLERS.

I HURRIED back to my apartment at the inn in a state of mind little removed from insanity, and paced backwards and forwards for a while, totally unable to compose or collect my thoughts. There was a singing in my ears, as if twenty tea-kettles had been boiling round me, and an overwhelming consciousness of some dreadful event impending, weighed like a dead load upon my spirits. I had seen and heard fearful things. The widow's scream still rang through the air, and her maniac form, as she called aloud for mercy, was before me. Then came the stern, yet humane deportment of the Judge, —his deep and sonorous voice, as he prayed God to have mercy on the young man's soul; and last of all, the image of Brockman himself

crossed my mind's eye, bringing back with it a perfect consciousness of all that had occurred, and of the necessity which existed for immediate and momentous exertion.

Having regained my self-command, I dispatched a messenger for Mr. Pleader, in whose judgment I could not but feel the deepest confidence, and of whose disposition to serve his client no doubt could be entertained. He obeyed the summons instantly; and taking precisely the same view of the case which had been taken by myself, he began to consider it in all its bearings, with a degree of dispassionate acumen for which I had justly given him credit. Like myself, he saw clearly that Brockman was the victim of a conspiracy; and as soon as he had been made acquainted with the particulars of my first journey to Maidstone, he decided at once that there were other and more weighty parties to that conspiracy than the family of the Petleys. "Who is the third passenger of whom you speak?" asked he. "Do you know him? Can you tell us where to find him?"

I was on the point of answering in the negative, when, accidentally looking through the

window, I beheld the very person in conversation with the constable of my own parish, on the opposite side of the way. "There he is!" cried I. "And there he must not remain," exclaimed the lawyer, putting on his hat, and hurrying down-stairs. I followed immediately, and, as good fortune would have it, we reached the object of our search before he had parted from his companion. "One word with you, Sir," said I, addressing myself to him. "With me, Sir!" replied the fellow, reddening; "I know not what business you can have with me. I am in a hurry, and cannot wait."—"But you must wait," exclaimed the barrister. "There is a serious charge against you; and from this spot you stir not, except in the custody of an officer.—Constable, do your duty, and secure that man."

"Secure me!" replied the other; "let me see the man that will secure me, without a magistrate's warrant or authority. That I will not resist, but till that be produced, lay hands on me at your peril." The fellow, as he uttered these words, thrust his hand into his bosom, and pulled out a pistol. The officer hung

back, a crowd began to assemble, and in spite of the efforts of Mr. Pleader and myself to hinder it, he mixed himself with the mob and disappeared. There was nothing now for it except to obtain a regular warrant; and as the constable professed to be acquainted with his place of abode, and knew his name, we had every reason to hope that he might yet be secured. He was, it appeared, a person of considerable consequence in the Custom-house at Dover: "his name was Joseph Sly, and unless the world belie him," added the officer, "a greater rogue is nowhere to be met with."

A warrant was soon procured, on my making oath, that I had reason to suspect the individual named in it of nefarious practices against the revenue laws. Armed with this, the constable set off, determined, as he assured us, to overcome all resistance; and I, by way of whiling away the time which might be expected to elapse before he should return, determined to pay a visit both to Mrs. Brockman and her son. The former I found in a state of the most pitiable distress. Fit after fit had come upon her so fast, after her removal out of court, that her

medical attendant altogether despaired of her recovery; and though these had happily ceased, they gave place only to a stupor, such as hardly permitted her to recognize, far less open her mind to any one. Under these circumstances, I considered it altogether needless to protract my stay beside her. From her lodgings I accordingly hastened to the gaol, and though it wanted but half an hour of the ordinary time of locking up, the turnkey, aware how deeply I was interested in the fate of the prisoner, hesitated not to admit me. I repaired to the condemned cell. It was on the ground-floor; a narrow recess, resembling a vault in a churchyard, more than a place of confinement for a living man. The only light admitted, was through the door—an iron grating, over which a strong wooden shutter, perforated to admit the air, could be fastened as soon as night set in. There sat the unfortunate youth upon a stone-bench—the only bed allowed him. Yet he was less cast down, far less apparently desperate than when I found him the inhabitant of a less comfortless dungeon, in expectation of the day of trial. He held out his manacled hand to me, and eagerly

inquired after his mother. "She is better," said I, "and I trust will do well. But how are you, Brockman? How have the awful events of the day affected you?"

"As they ought to affect me, I humbly hope," replied he; "I know that I have but few days to live, and I am fully conscious that, though no murderer, I shall deserve my fate on account of my conduct to my mother. For her, Mr. Williams, I feel most deeply."—Here his voice faltered, and the tear struggled to escape from his eye.—"Oh, who will comfort her, who will console her, who will wipe away from her memory the shame and agony of such a death as mine! You will befriend her, Sir, you will be kind to her, and give her your countenance, I am aware; but she will not survive it. Mother and son will perish together, for her heart is too tender not to break."

"I would not have you encourage false hopes," replied I, forgetting, in the impulse of the moment, the resolution which I had formed, not to communicate aught to the prisoner till something more decisive had transpired. "I

would not have you encourage false hopes, very far from it. I would, on the contrary, advise you to prepare for the worst. But your friends are actively exerting themselves in your favour; your speech in Court has made a strong impression, and the agitation of the Petleys was remarked by all. You may yet be liberated, and I pray that you shall."

Brockman shook his head, though the bright glance of his eye showed that even this address had renewed the desire of life. "To say that I would not rejoice, were your exertions crowned with success," said he, "would be to say an untruth. I am but young to die, and to die by the hands of a common executioner—ugh!—it is a horrible idea. But I fear you only flatter yourselves; you excite no hope in me; for what ground have you to go upon? Was not the evidence direct and conclusive?"

"Yes, but there are other matters, of which we will not now speak. This conspiracy, whose existence you would not credit, is seen through by the world at large, and it will, I trust, be brought to light."

"Oh, talk not of the past," cried he; "I

have indeed been played upon, bitterly, cruelly deceived. You were right, Sir; Harriet is a devil. But I forgive her, as I forgive her brothers; and may they be forgiven elsewhere."

The arrival of the turnkey here put a stop to farther conversation. I accordingly shook hands with Brockman, and having promised to call again on the morrow, I followed my conductor. On our way to the outer gate of the prison, we passed another cell, something similar to that in which my young friend was immured, but a degree less gloomy. It was inhabited, and a deep groan which came through the holes in the shutter, indicated that its tenant was ill at ease in mind or body, or both.

"Who is confined there?" said I.

"One of your friend's associates," replied the gaoler; "he that is to be transported for life. He is in a strange taking, Sir. He has not ceased to shake as if he had the ague ever since they were brought back from Court; and the doctor who has seen him, knows not what to make of him. He says, if the fellow be not better to-morrow, he must be removed to a

warmer place; but for my part, I think this too good for him."

We had by this time reached the gate, and the locks, bolts, and chains being one by one removed, the massy portal grated harshly on its hinges, and I again found myself in the street. It is unnecessary to give a minute detail of the proceedings of the next five days, either within or without the walls of the prison. The constable, who had promised so fair as to the arrest of Sly, found, as many others find, that it is easier to make a promise than to perform it—Joseph effectually eluded the search. For myself, I paid frequent visits both to Mrs. Brockman and her son, the former of whom slowly recovered, chiefly, I believe, because we deemed it right to put the best face upon affairs, and to flatter her with hopes which we ourselves scarcely encouraged. With respect to the latter, though for the first day or two he talked much of the possible result of the petition, and said something of his own intentions in case its prayer should be attended to; yet when the third and the fourth passed on, and

no intelligence reached him, his hopes gradually declined, till they may be said to have become utterly extinct. He now anxiously desired to see his mother. She was still too weak to be moved, and of this I informed him, warning him, at the same time, that we had kept the nature of his sentence a secret from her; but when now the evening of Monday had arrived, and no pardon or reprieve came with it, I deemed it incumbent on me to fulfil his wishes at all hazards. Still we resolved to conceal the truth. It was accordingly agreed between us, that she should be told of a probable commutation of the sentence of death to that of transportation for life; and having become somewhat of an adept in the art of deceiving, I agreed to convey the communication. For this purpose, I repaired to her lodging early on the Tuesday morning, and finding her so far convalescent as to be able to sit up in her chair, I entered at once upon the business of my message.

The good woman expected something, from the unusually early hour of my arrival. "What news bring you, Mr. Williams?" said she; "you are the bearer of some intelligence, I am

certain. Oh, God grant that it may be favourable!"

"Not unfavourable, my friend," replied I; "at least not so bad as we had a right to expect. You must make up your mind, I fear, to be separated from your son for a time, but the separation will not be eternal."

"Then he does not suffer!" cried she wildly yet joyfully, and clasping her hands together; "Oh, thank Heaven! thank Heaven! What matters transportation? what boots it where we live? For I will accompany him, Mr. Williams. Yes, I will go in the same ship, or if that be not allowed, in the next that sails, and we will build a cottage among the woods and wilds of New South Wales, and smile when we think of England, and all the cares and troubles we endured there. They tell me it is a glorious country, and a glorious climate; and were it not so, what shall I care for climate or country as long as I am with my boy?"

It was with much difficulty that I could refrain from weeping aloud, when I beheld the unfortunate woman thus rejoicing in a lie; but I did restrain myself, and went on to propose

that she should visit her son this day in prison. "Goes he so soon?" exclaimed she; "surely they will not send him off to-morrow? But no matter; I am ready, and perhaps I ought not to desire his longer stay here, since he must abide in a dungeon. Go on, I will follow you."

Mrs. Brockman rose as she spoke, but her weakness was such that she almost immediately fell back upon the sofa. "I cannot walk yet," said she faintly; "you must have me carried, and glad, glad shall I be to bear the fatigue, even if it be such." I accordingly procured four stout porters, and having caused her to be well covered up, she was removed, without suffering any serious inconvenience, to the prison.

I shall not attempt to describe the meeting, far less the parting, although I was present at both. They were such as will not bear a delineation in words. The latter, indeed, was on Will's part so solemn, that I trembled lest his mother should surmise the truth; but it occurred not to her: so just is the observation, that we believe what we desire, even if the grounds of belief be on the contrary side of the

question. She remained with him about two hours, and having promised not to come again till the day after the morrow, she was borne back to her apartment.

Whilst I and my two friends were thus employed, Mr. Pleader, and the other gentlemen who took so lively an interest in our affairs, were straining every nerve to procure information, and to substantiate their claim to an exercise of the Royal mercy. As yet, however, all their efforts had failed. The Petleys, probably conscious that public suspicion was roused, had fled the country; of Sly no tidings were procured, except that it appeared on examining his papers that he had defrauded the revenue to a large amount, and for a long series of years. No doubt, his fears suggested to him that this was the ground of his arrest, for the real nature of the charge against him had never been communicated. Be that, however, as it may, no trace of him could be discovered, and hence all idea of saving Brockman was abandoned, not by me only, but by the rest. Of this I thought it my duty to inform him. He received the intelligence with fortitude, with great fortitude, but not without

a pang; for there is a vast difference between the expression of an indifference to life when death appears remote, and the feeling of that indifference when it is actually near at hand. He strove, however, by every means which religion and reason could suggest, to reconcile himself to a fate apparently irremediable. I prayed with him, I administered to him the sacrament, and, at his own earnest request, I spent the entire night of Tuesday in his cell. From the moment of Mrs. Brockman's departure, indeed, I shut myself up with him altogether; and painful as this duty was, there were not wanting numerous circumstances which gave to it a degree of even pleasurable interest such as I could not have anticipated. The fact I believe to be, that all violent excitement is pleasing while it lasts: in the excitement to which I was now subjected there was no want of violence; and hence, as well as from contemplating the effect of conscious innocence upon a religious mind, I cannot pronounce the night spent in a condemned cell at Maidstone the most determinately miserable which it has been my lot to spend.

Tired nature, however, gave way at last. Having solemnly commended ourselves to the protection of the Deity, we lay down upon a mattress with which the gaoler had humanely supplied us, and I was not less surprised than delighted to perceive, that long before my thoughts had attained any degree of composure, my companion was fast asleep. I followed his example as quickly as I could, and slept also.

How long we had lain in a state of unconsciousness I cannot tell, but the early rays of the sun were just beginning to shine through the gratings of the dungeon, when the rattling of chains, and the drawing back of bolts, disturbed us. I thought Brockman's hand shook a little when he extended it towards me, and I could perceive a sort of involuntary contraction of the eyebrow, such as indicated a severe internal struggle between courage and natural weakness. His breath was suspended too, till the door creaked upon its hinges, from the expectation, no doubt, that it would open to admit the executioner. But instead of the executioner, the sheriff entered, and there was an

expression in his countenance not usually exhibited by the bearer of deadly tidings. We both stared at him in silence.

"Young man," said he, stepping up to Brockman, "it gives me sincere satisfaction to inform you, that his Majesty has been pleased to order a delay in the execution of your sentence, till certain matters connected with the offence of which you stand convicted, shall have been more accurately investigated." The blood rushed all at once to Brockman's cheeks, and then receded again. He gasped for breath, and but that I held his arm, would have fallen to the ground. "How is this!" cried I, beyond measure overjoyed; "what fortunate occurrence has brought this about? Have you succeeded in apprehending the fugitive, or what has been done?"—"Not so," answered the sheriff, with a smile; "we have failed on all hands; but there is a Providence which preserves the innocent, and it has wonderfully interfered in favour of this youth. As I see that he is calm, the whole story may be told at once. His innocence has been clearly proved, by the confession of one of his associates, and here is

the royal pardon, with which an express has just arrived."

I will not attempt to describe the scene which followed, or repeat the many congratulatory and admonitory adages to which Will was compelled to listen, not only from the sheriff, but from the chaplain, and even from the gaoler. Let me rather detail at once the means by which an event so unlooked for and joyful was brought about; and for this a few words will suffice.

I have already mentioned, that on a former occasion I was startled by the sound of a heavy groaning, which proceeded from a cell near that of the condemned man to whom I had been paying a visit, and where, as the gaoler informed me, Edward Petley was confined. The illness with which that unhappy person was afflicted seized him in the dock, and never left him after. It seemed as if the hand of his victim when laid upon his shoulder, had been filled with some deadly poison; for the shivering which came over him at the time, and to which all within the Court were eye-witnesses, ceased not to agitate his frame to the last. He was supported back to prison in a violent fit of the ague, and

it soon became manifest that his life was in danger.

For some days he bore his illness in stubborn silence; but as the danger increased, remorse began to rack his mind, and strange expressions to escape his lips. It was on the morning of the Tuesday, on the very day preceding the execution, that, after a severe contest, he desired to see the chaplain, and to him made a full confession of his own guilt, and a full declaration of Will's innocence. The story which Will had told was, it appeared, accurately correct. He, the dying man, shot the exciseman, whilst his brother cut his throat, having wounded Brockman in the hand when attempting to wrest the knife from him. Nor was this the only piece of intelligence which he conveyed. He exposed a series of frauds and crimes, in which Joseph Sly had taken an active part; and the whole being carefully noted down and read over to him, he signed it as his dying declaration. With grounds so clear to act upon, there was no difficulty whatever in obtaining the Royal pardon, the arrival of which had been thus long delayed only by the absence from

town of the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Little now remains for me to add. Brockman, as a matter of course, was set at liberty; and his mental sufferings during the period of his imprisonment, especially since sentence of death was passed upon him, being considered as a sufficient punishment of his offence against the revenue, all charges from that quarter were dropped. From his mother the real peril of his case was, however, carefully concealed till many weeks after her return in the country; nor was she even then made acquainted with it, till, to keep it longer a secret, would have been of no avail; for the good woman's constitution never recovered the injury which many weeks of acute agitation inflicted upon it. She lived, indeed, to see her son, not only restored to his former respectable condition in life, but put in command of the very vessel which he had all along been meant to command; and she died at last blessing God for his mercies here, and humbly trusting to be admitted as a participator in his still greater mercies hereafter.

As to the Petleys, the younger of the two

breathed his last a few hours after his confession had been signed, and was buried in the churchyard of Maidstone. His bones were not removed to pollute the cemetery of his native parish, and no stone was erected to his memory. Of the others the fate is uncertain. Zachariah, it is true, underwent his sentence, and is doubtless herding, at this day, with beings as wicked as himself; but of the father, the sister, and Tom, no account has reached us. Neither is any thing accurately known of the destiny of Joseph Sly. About six months after these events, I read, indeed, in one of the London papers, that one Josiah Turpin, *alias* Joseph Sly, had suffered the punishment due to burglary under aggravated circumstances; but whether the person alluded to was my former travelling companion, I had no opportunity to learn.

Of Will Brockman I never heard any thing but what was favourable, from the moment of his liberation. His good sense soon taught him to shake off the remains of an attachment so misplaced as that with which he had bound himself to Harriet Petley; nor has he, as far as I know, permitted any other to arise in its room. The

direction of his trading voyages, which are effected between London and Hamburgh, do not permit him to pay frequent visits to St. Alphage; but whenever he comes, he fails not to bring presents of rare and valuable articles to me and to my household. Of course, a cover is always laid for him at our table, and it not unfrequently happens, that we refer back, in our conversations over our wine, to past events. On such he always touches with becoming seriousness and solemnity, and never fails to thank God that he is no longer a slave to the habits, or exposed to the risks, which invariably accompany the career of THE SMUGGLER.

bottom of the glen, and from a rapid torrent, settles into a quiet pool, and where a rustic bridge is thrown across, from the opposite extremity of which a footpath leads round the base of the hill towards the church ; the other conducts to no particular object, but opens merely upon the green valley. There is a lawn in this garden, in which beds and baskets for flowers have been carefully cut; but the grass has grown rank and long, and the flowers are choked up with kootch, nettles, and other noxious weeds. So is it with the trim walks, which are now hardly to be distinguished from the soil; and, above all, the fragments of broken glass, scattered here and there, as the wind has swept them from the now empty leads, give to the place an appearance of utter neglect, such as cannot be looked upon without pain. The only things, indeed, about this cottage, which do not seem as if they required the hand of man to prune them, are a few common shrubs in the front, and a single tall walnut-tree behind. The former grow luxuriantly; the latter continues to overshadow the thatched roof, as it has done for ages, although a honeysuckle

bower, placed beneath its shelter, has fallen absolutely to ruin. As no view can be obtained, either from the cottage or its environs, of any other human habitation, as the very church is concealed by a curve in the hills, over which its tower is too humble to appear, it requires no very great exertion of fancy to imagine, when you are standing there, that from the world, as it is called, you are wholly shut out, and that you have nothing farther to do with the turmoil and bustle, and evil passions, which torment your less fortunate fellow-creatures.

Of the interior of this cottage, a few words will suffice to convey a correct picture. It contains two rooms, one on each side of a narrow passage, with a kitchen on the ground-floor; above stairs there are likewise two bed-rooms, and a dark closet. All these apartments are covered with the remains of a neat paper, into which the damp has sorely eaten, and which, in consequence, hangs down in many fragments from the wall. The wood, once purely white, has become yellow, and the dry-rot has made considerable progress in it; the stoves, covered with rust, are falling gradually from their

places as the plaster peels off, and the bricks separate which support them: in a word, the entire cottage, both within and without, with all that belongs to it or surrounds it, cannot fail to impress a strange visitant with sensations more than ordinarily gloomy; for it looks as if here, more than elsewhere, an evil genius presided, causing few years to do the work of many, and bringing over it the influence of decay and desolation, even more quickly than that influence usually prevails over the deserted abodes of men.

I never heard that the cottage in question had any particular name, but during a space of four-and-twenty years it was occupied by two persons, who may be said to have lived entirely for each other, and who now sleep soundly side by side in our village church-yard. Should any wayfaring man happen to visit that modest cemetery, and desire, as it is possible he may, to stand upon their graves, I will tell him where to look for them. There are no monuments placed over them; not so much as a wooden railing, or a bunch of wild flowers, distinguishes theirs from other graves; but they have a mark

of their own not to be mistaken. As the beings who tenant them were recluses in their life, even so in death they have not thrown off the character. Their graves are dug at the very outskirt of the church-yard, close behind the northern fence, in that quarter which superstition still hinders the peasantry from filling, as they fill other quarters, with the bodies of their relations; and they are consequently far apart from other graves. The rankness of the grass, too, which waves above them, might of itself be sufficient to point them out, for no one willingly treads upon them, far less rests there for a moment.

In this spot, beneath two common green mounds, repose the former inhabitants of the cottage; a son, who, though to others an object of pitiable loathing, was, to his mother's eyes, dearer than the light of heaven, and a mother, whom sin, and its attendant sorrow, brought to an untimely end, by means which no right-minded person can contemplate without horror. She perished by her own desperate hand, as if existence were a burthen too heavy to be borne, after she had been deprived of

one who, during life, was an object of continual care and anxiety, and who was totally incapable of estimating her fondness, far less of returning it, as a mother's fondness is usually returned by an only child. Their story is not a long, nor, I fear, at least in certain of its particulars, a very uncommon one, so I will relate it, premising, that to the truth of some of its details my own observation can testify; whilst, for a knowledge of the rest, I am indebted to a combination of circumstances, of which it is not necessary to enter into any explanation.

On a certain day in the beginning of autumn, in the year 17—, there drew up at the principal inn in Folkestone, a post-chaise, from which a lady and a gentleman, the former carrying an infant in her arms, alighted. The lady was extremely beautiful, and dressed in the first style of fashion ; the gentleman had the air of a man of rank, and appeared several years older than his fair companion. They gave no account of themselves, nor could the postilion who drove them convey any farther intelligence, than that they came that day from Ashford,

and, as far as he could learn, on the day previous from London. It was, of course, surmised that they preferred this to the ordinary coach road; that they were on their way to Dover, and from thence to the Continent; nor was the conjecture the less feasible, that they travelled wholly unattended by servants, either male or female. They were accordingly received as strangers, and treated as such.

The behaviour of the gentleman, however, speedily showed that he at least was not an absolute stranger to these parts, though what the nature of his connexion with them might be, or how formed, no one ever discovered. Having seen the lady settled in the best apartment which the hotel could furnish, he desired the waiter to conduct him to the house of Mr. ——, at that time the only attorney in the place, and steward to most of the aristocracy who dwelt near. His visit to the attorney lasted about half an hour, after which he returned to the inn, and remained there during the rest of the day.

No orders being issued, as night drew on, respecting horses or a carriage for the fol-

lowing morning, and the gentleman requiring a bed-room for himself, though as near to that of the lady as circumstances would allow, the whole family, from the landlord down to the waiter, and from the waiter to the boots, began to wonder in what relation the parties stood towards each other, and of what nature the business could be which brought them to this secluded part of the world. There was, moreover, in their respective manners, the one towards the other, a great deal well calculated to excite the curiosity, if not the suspicion of vulgar minds. It was remarked by the men who carried in dinner, and waited upon them during the progress of the meal, that no familiar conversation, indeed that very little conversation of any kind, passed between them. The gentleman preserved a cold, and even austere deportment towards the lady; the lady, on the other hand, shrank back, apparently in alarm, from his slightest notice; she sighed frequently, eat little or nothing, and devoted the whole of her attention to her babe, a child apparently about three months old. But the spectacle

which passed under the eye of the chambermaid was even more remarkable than this. Having entered their apartment somewhat abruptly, she beheld the lady on her knees before the gentleman, with clasped hands, and cheeks suffused with tears, whilst he was hurrying away from her, if not in anger, at all events in a frame of mind not to be worked upon by entreaty. Indeed, the wary abigail had been for some time previous an ear-witness to a conversation of no very tender kind, and it was solely to satisfy herself that she had not mistaken its purport, that she carried in bedroom candles long before they had been rung for. All these circumstances tended, as may be 'magined, not only to keep alive curiosity, but to stir up a deeper feeling throughout the various members of mine host's family, who were then too little accustomed to entertain well-dressed travellers, not to desire an acquaintance with the names and family circumstances of the few who chanced to put up at the sign of the Black Horse. As the reader is not perhaps aware of the mode adopted for the attainment

of such information, it may be worth while to state how it was customarily managed at the head inn in Folkestone.

In case you travel in your own carriage, and with servants of your own, things are easily brought to bear ; a pot of beer, or a glass of brandy, secures the communicativeness of the footman. Should the vehicle be a post-chaise, and your only attendant the post-boy, he is pumped to the uttermost; and when found to know nothing, your chamber is carefully examined for a card, the back of a letter, or a direction-plate upon your portmanteau. In the present instance, all these means were adopted without success; and finally, the linen left out for use was closely inspected, under the idea that it might possibly bear a name, and certainly a cypher; but neither was there. The gentleman's night-cap, the lady's *robe de chambre*, and the child's bib, were alike unmarked. The conclusion drawn from these various premises, was a very natural, and, as it chanced, a very just one, that things could not be altogether as they ought to be, and that a degree of mystery hung over the strangers, such as

none of his Majesty's honest lieges ought, under any circumstances, to maintain.

The suspicious curiosity entertained by the innkeeper and his household, began before long to extend itself, not without cause, over a wider circle. No sooner had the strange gentleman quitted Mr. ——'s office, than the tenant of the cottage above described was sent for, and desired to remove his family to some other habitation without delay. The arguments employed to induce compliance with this request, of whatever nature they might be, proved successful; and the very next morning, a worthy shepherd, with his wife and five children, migrated from the parish of St. Alphage, into that immediately adjoining. Workmen were instantly hired, and employed upon both house and premises. The former, instead of a common labourer's hut, was converted, as speedily as the combined exertions of masons, carpenters, and thatchers could convert it, into an abode fit for the residence of a small but genteel family; whilst the latter underwent just so much of change, as to render them not out of character with the novel pretensions of the ha-

bitation to which they were attached. In completing these arrangements, however, notwithstanding the diligence of the workmen, and the strict superintendency of their ostensible employer, a full fortnight was expended, during the whole of which time the lady and gentleman continued to live at the inn. But they lived in absolute seclusion. The lady, indeed, never once crossed the threshold; the gentleman held converse with no one except the attorney; and even with him he was known to have conversed only twice.

The repairs of the cottage being at length completed, the artificers received their wages, and were dismissed; a sufficient time was then allowed for the walls to become tolerably dry, after which the principal upholsterer in Folkestone was directed to supply the domicile with every article of necessary furniture, not of the first or most expensive quality, but such as might suit the wishes of persons accustomed to move in a respectable sphere of life, though not desirous of seeing company, or entertaining strangers. These orders were likewise obeyed; and finally, a female servant, an elderly woman

of good character, was hired, and sent on to get the house in readiness against the arrival of those by whom it was destined to be occupied. Another week passed on ere the latter arrangements were complete, and the strange lady and gentleman continued their sojourn during that period also at the inn.

At length the landlord's bill was ordered, and though not trifling in amount, it was discharged without a single observation, and a post-chaise was desired to be in readiness. In retiring to give the necessary directions, mine host, whether by accident or design, left the door ajar; when the following brief dialogue was overheard by an individual, who happened—of course without premeditation—to be standing in the passage.

"And whither must I go next?" asked the lady in a tone of deep anguish.

"To a place far better than your conduct deserves," was the reply; "to a secluded spot, where you will find both leisure and opportunity to look back upon your past misdeeds, and to make your peace with Heaven." The preceding sentence was uttered with firmness, per-

haps with harshness; but a pause of several seconds ensued, and the speaker went on in a strain very different. "Eliza, I little thought it would ever have come to this;—I little thought that I should live to say that you had dishonoured me, and that I had abandoned you. Did my confidence in you deserve it? Fool that I was, to fancy any woman trustworthy, or any man not a villain! But it is done; and the bitterness of death is passed. Farewell, Eliza! even now, with all your guilt upon your head, I love you. Your's was the only image that made a home for itself in my heart, nor shall any other displace it. I shall return to mix with crowds, whilst you are alone; but mine will be the harder fate of the two. God! has it come to this!"

The speaker might, perhaps, have proceeded, but he was interrupted here by a long, loud, hysteric shriek from his miserable auditor. That was a sound to which no human being could listen, without instantly rushing to ascertain from whence it came, and how the being was situated who gave it utterance. In a moment the apartment was filled, and the

lady was seen prostrate upon the floor, not, indeed, in a state of insensibility, but in one infinitely less enviable. On raising her up, she beheld no one, except the gentleman who had brought her hither, and from whom, it appeared, she was so soon to be separated. "Stay, stay, Edmund!" she exclaimed, whilst her tearless eyes were extended to their fullest stretch, and her hair, shaken loose from its fastenings, streamed in beautiful, but disordered masses, over her neck and shoulders. "Stay, stay but for a moment. One word, only one word—hear it, hear it—it is the last I shall ever utter to you!—Oh, not yet, leave me not yet—not alone—quite alone. You do not know—you—cold and forbidding as you are—even you will pity"—At this moment the infant, which had hitherto lain asleep upon the sofa, awoke, and uttered a cry. Its voice acted like an electric shock, both upon the gentleman and the lady. The former, whose emotions had become so violent, as to render abortive all attempts at concealment or suppression, recovered in a moment his self-command; and, in a voice of stern authority, desired the intruders to quit the

apartment. The latter flew to the spot where the child lay, and snatching it up in her arms, pressed her lips to its face, more like one acting under the influence of derangement, than a sane person. "It is enough, madam," cried he; "the fit of foolish softness is over. To your carriage." These words were heard as the door was closing.

What followed, no one can tell. The strangers remained together for several minutes, conversing in a low tone, and during the continuance of the conversation, the gentleman was heard to pace the room backwards and forwards; but when the waiter entered to announce that the carriage was ready, no traces of the late scene could be discerned on either of their countenances. The settled severity, which, except for a minute or two, had shaded his features since his arrival, was again there; and she was pale, and melancholy, and timid, as she had ever been. They walked downstairs, she bearing the infant, and entered the chaise in silence; the door was closed, and the post-boy directed to drive to the cottage. There the lady, with her charge, was set down,

and her trunks given up to the care of the female servant. She turned round just as the last step was slammed to, but the baby was in her arms, and the hand which she held out, apparently without being conscious of the motion, was not accepted. The gentleman threw himself back in the carriage, and called to the postilion to go on. "Where, Sir?" was the reply. "To London — to London, by the nearest way; and drive as if you drove for your life." The boy obeyed. The horses' heads were instantly turned, he cracked his whip and a scream, as if from one utterly deserted and forlorn—such a scream as the mariner gives, when he stands upon a parting wreck, and sees the last boat push off, was scarcely heard amid the noise of the wheels. The carriage flew rather than rolled through the village, and the individual who occupied it was never afterwards seen in this part of the country.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SUICIDE.

I WILL not continue my tale, as it has begun, under the cloak of mystery, or in enigmas, but inform the reader at once who the wretched female was that became thus unexpectedly one of my parishioners, as well as what were the circumstances which led her, in the bloom of youth and beauty, to shut herself up in so retired a spot as the parish of St. Alphage.

Eliza Thornton was the only child of a London merchant, whose wealth was reputed to be great, whose credit was great in proportion, and who, whilst he devoted a certain number of hours every morning to the duties of trade at his counting-house in the city, returned to dinner, and to spend the rest of the evening, at the west end of the town. Mr. Thornton mixed, and

was entitled to mix, as well from his birth as from his personal accomplishments, not, perhaps, in the very haut ton, but in that respectable circle, which, in point of intelligence and real good-breeding, comes not behind any class of English society. His friends belonged chiefly to his own profession; there were intermixed among them a sprinkling of almost all other professions; and not a few of the members of the Lower House, as well as here and there a member of the Upper, might frequently be seen at his hospitable board. Wherever he was known, he was respected, for sound judgment, great intelligence, and indisputable honour.

Having lost his wife a few years after the birth of Eliza, Mr. Thornton unfortunately did, what too many men involved in business are apt to do—he left the education of his daughter entirely to the management of strangers; he brought into his family a fashionable Swiss governess, whose recommendations from one or two ladies with whom she had lived were unimpeachable; he hired the best masters which London could afford to instruct his child in the accomplishments of music, drawing, and paint-

ing; he spared no expense in order to perfect her in a knowledge of the French, Italian, and other indispensable tongues; and, having done all this, he fancied he had done enough. Not that he was regardless—utterly regardless of his daughter's moral welfare, for a better-hearted and better-principled man lived not,—but his own time was so fully occupied, his business was so extensive, and its details of so complicated a nature, that he could not avoid committing the management in this, as well as other respects, to mercenaries. The consequence was, that the girl grew up to be an accomplished and elegant female—gay, sprightly, and even amiable, in her natural dispositions; but as completely wanting in solid principle, in that principle which alone can guide a young woman safely through life, as if she had been brought up at the court of a German potentate, and early initiated into all its mysteries.

Eliza Thornton made her *debut*, or, as it is otherwise termed, came out, the very day after she had completed her eighteenth year. Favoured by nature in no ordinary degree, and possessed of talents far beyond the common

standard, it is no wonder that she instantly became an object of attention to the other sex. Into whatever saloon or drawing-room she entered, a murmur of delighted applause failed not to greet her arrival; and her chair, as soon as she occupied one, was instantly surrounded by a host of fashionable youths. Eliza played divinely, and her voice was rich, clear, and powerful, like that of the thrush in the beginning of autumn, or the nightingale's in a serene moonlight night in the month of May. She was listened to in breathless silence; and the admiration experienced, or pretended, was too deep to vent itself, as soon as the notes had ceased, in a burst of applause. For a second or two all were usually mute, as if they continued to drink in the silver tones of her voice, or were listening to catch the echo of these tones from distant waters. Attention and approbation so marked, and so continual, was too much for a mind formed like that of Eliza Thornton; her natural timidity quickly passed away, and she became, ere the expiration of a single season, one of the most determined flirts and dauntless coquettes about town.

In spite, however, of this change in her manners, her extreme beauty and undeniable accomplishments continued to command for her the attentions, not of the thoughtless part of the other sex alone, but of several men of undoubted respectability and unquestionable integrity. The reputed wealth of her father, indeed, failed not to bring round her multitudes of those contemptible beings, whose fortune, for the most part, is carried about upon their persons, and whose talents wholly unfit them for any other means of bettering their fortunes, than by cheating some rich or silly female into a marriage;—but all her admirers were not of that class. Among others, she was addressed by a Mr. Montague, an old and intimate friend of her father, a merchant—and, which in her eyes was of more consequence, a member of the House of Commons. Mr. Montague was too rich, and too generally respected, to be dismissed, as she had dismissed her other lovers, by a single absolute refusal. She neither encouraged nor rejected his suit; but, under the guidance of Mademoiselle Fleuret—now advanced from the rank of governess to that of

bosom friend,—she kept him as a sort of set-off against other suitors, and a last resort in case her hopes of a title should fail. For in Eliza's ideas of matrimony, it was by no means necessary to consult the feelings of the heart, or to inquire whether or not the temper and habits of the man with whom she was to spend her life at all accorded with her own. She had been too long the pupil of Mademoiselle Fleuret to take any such old-fashioned matters into consideration. "Marry for an establishment, my dear," was her friend's continual advice. "Nobody now-a-days, not born and bred five hundred miles from town, so much as expects to love her husband. You must look to him for a house, carriages, and servants; and having these, I will answer for it, that lovers will not be wanting." So the guardian of her youth advised, and so Eliza resolved to act: but she was as yet too young, and too happy in a single state, to rush into matrimony with a man for whom she cared not two farthings.

Nor is it, perhaps, to be wondered at, that Eliza Thornton could not love Mr. Montague, at least at first sight. True, he was wealthy;

he moved in the first circles; his manners were those of a gentleman, and his person was not disagreeable;—but then he was full twenty years older than herself, and there was a degree of gravity about him such as she could not altogether relish. Eliza, volatile and thoughtless as she was, respected Mr. Montague, as all persons did with whom he came into contact; but she could not conceal from herself, that with this respect a degree of fear was mixed up, not certainly desirable in the feelings of a wife towards her husband.

Things had continued in this state for several months, and the season was drawing to a close, when Eliza was astonished by receiving, one morning before she had quitted her dressing-room, a message from her father, who desired to see her without delay. She obeyed the summons, and descending, found Mr. Thornton pacing backwards and forwards through the breakfast parlour, in a state of evident agitation. As soon as she entered he made an effort to appear cheerful, and placing a chair requested her to be seated; he then drew his

own close to hers, and taking her hand, addressed her as follows:—

"Eliza, I have seen with extreme satisfaction the attentions which you have long received from my valued friend Mr. Montague, and I am happy to say, that he has commissioned me to make you a positive offer of his hand and fortune. All that he desires in return is a direct answer, either in the affirmative or negative; because, as he justly observes, though his love for you be not less ardent than the love of younger men, still it is not consistent with his notions of decorum and propriety to continue longer in the state of unmeaning incertitude, in which your behaviour places him. Now, my love, though you must be quite aware that I desire nothing so much as your happiness; and though I do assure you that, let your decision be what it may, you shall never be subjected to remonstrance or reproach from me—there are certain circumstances which I think it my duty to lay fairly before you, and which will, perhaps, induce you not to cast away so favourable an opportunity of settling yourself in life. I am all but a ruined man. Speculations

in which I embarked under every prospect of success, have failed me; and though for a little while longer I may be able to keep up appearances, there is not the shadow of a hope that my house, furniture, indeed every thing belonging to me, will not, in a very short time, be brought to the hammer."

Eliza, at this intelligence, started from her seat: she looked perfectly aghast; and her father mistaking the import of that look, instantly added, "Nay, my child, do not imagine that your father could act so dishonourably as to keep this matter a secret from the intended husband of his child. Mr. Montague knows all—it was, indeed, at the close of that very conversation in which I made him acquainted with the real state of my affairs, that he generously laid himself and his princely revenues at your feet. So go, Eliza; I do not press you to determine in a moment how you are to act; go and consult Mademoiselle Fleuret; and as soon as you have come to a determination, let me know its tendency."

Eliza departed without offering one syllable in reply, and flew, as fast as the excitation of

her nerves would allow, to the apartment of her friend. Into the arms of that trusty confidant she immediately threw herself, and without assigning any cause for the circumstance, burst into a fit of excessive weeping. As might be expected, a behaviour so extraordinary, and so unusual, startled even the cold-blooded Swiss into something like feeling; and in a tone of real alarm, she besought her pupil to be composed, and to open to her the cause of her griefs. It was not, however, for some time, and till after repeated efforts, that Eliza could so far command herself, as to lay before her dear Fleuret the circumstances of her case; but at length the information was communicated, and the question naturally put how she was to act. "Act!" exclaimed the ex-governess; "how should you act, my dear? Your father, you say, is ruined, and here is a rich, worthy man anxious to have you without one sixpence of fortune; would you not be the silliest creature on earth to refuse him?"—"But then I do not, and I never can love him; nay more, I dread his great correctness, and I am chilled by his rigidity."—"Pugh, nonsense! how often

have I told you that love may do very well for the daughter of a country parson, but is wholly unlooked for in a married woman of fashion. Accept the excellent man's offer immediately; and when we remove to Mr. Montague's mansion, trust me that Mrs. Montague shall be behind no Countess in the land in any thing necessary to constitute the lady of high breeding." —"But, dear Fleuret, I have seen another man, whom I think I could marry and love too, and who swears that he adores me. Can I accept Mr. Montague under these circumstances?"— "Is your friend rich?"—"No; he is an officer in the Guards, without any fortune except his commission."—"Then think no more of him for the present: marry Mr. Montague as fast as ever you can, and when that is over, we shall see what can be done with the handsome soldier."

Such were the lessons inculcated into the mind of Eliza Thornton, by a woman whom her father had selected out of a hundred, to direct her education, and who came under his roof, bearing the highest and most unqualified testimonials from more than one family of rank.

Whether there are many Mademoiselles Fleurets within the bounds of Great Britain, I take it not upon me to determine; but this I cannot avoid observing, that a correct knowledge of the foreign idioms and pronunciation must be very highly valued in certain circles, since it prompts parents so frequently to pass by multitudes of their own modest countrywomen, and to assign to foreign adventurers the most sacred trust which nature has committed to them, and which they can possibly commit to others. In the instance before us, an act of indiscretion so glaring, was unfortunately too surely followed by its natural consequences; and the only child of a doating father, grew up to be an elegant and unprincipled woman.

Against arguments so cogent as those above detailed, what could Eliza Thornton oppose? She yielded to them; and made her father happy by employing him on so agreeable an errand, as to be the bearer to his friend Montague of her permission to advance his suit in his own proper person. That suit was granted; and the ordinary preliminaries having been gone through,—a stipulation having been made

and acceded to, that Mrs. Montague should not be compelled to part with her inestimable friend Mademoiselle Fleuret; a handsome jointure being settled upon the bride, in case her husband should die before her, and a large allowance, under the denomination of pin-money, granted, the day which was to make him the happiest of men, and her one of the wealthiest of women about town, was fixed. In three weeks from the date of her father's communication, she consented to be removed from the shelter of his roof to that of her husband's.

But though Eliza entered thus readily into the schemes and wishes of her advisers, it would be doing injustice to her feelings were the reader to suppose, that she was either happy, or even comfortable. The reverse was the case; Eliza did love, and, as her wedding-day drew nearer, loved passionately, a man whom she was in the constant habit of meeting, and who, in external appearance at least, and in point of age, was better adapted to catch the affections of such a girl, than the more estimable, but less elegant object of her choice.

The Honourable Captain Cecil occupied all her thoughts, even at those moments when her lips moved in conversation with her intended husband. Nor was he an object of greater interest to her, than she, in outward appearance at least, was an object of interest to him; vows of unalterable attachment were interchanged between them so late as the very week previous to her wedding, and even at the altar these vows were neither cancelled nor forgotten.

Nothing could be more splendid than the dress of the bride, or more angelic than her whole appearance, when, at the hour of nine in the morning of the 10th of June 17—, she was led into St. George's Church by the Right Hon. Lord Maryport, and by him committed to the care of Edmund Montague, Esq. At the door of the building stood Mr. Montague's chariot, with four splendid bays, caparisoned in the newest fashion, the postilions and footmen decorated with favours, and all things indicative of joy and festivity. Into it, as soon as the ceremony was ended, was Eliza handed by her now happy husband; and dear Fleuret being already seated, in a moment the vehicle was

in motion. The bride, it is reported, looked pale; but of that fact little opportunity was given to judge; for the horses dashed over the stones; Hyde-Park turnpike was quickly left behind; and long before evening the happy couple were immured in the shades of Elton-grove, a beautiful seat of Mr. Montague's, in the county of Oxford. There the honey-moon was spent in that state of felicity which is said usually to attend honey-moons; and the young lady almost learned to believe, that she had consulted not only prudence, but her own permanent comfort, in giving her hand to a man so amiable and so rational as Mr. Montague.

It is by no means improbable, that had Mademoiselle Fleuret been directed to seek another home, and Mr. Montague found more leisure to devote himself to the society of his young and volatile wife, that the distressing event which ruined the peace of both, and sent one, at least, into perpetual exile from the world, would never have happened. Of this, however, it is not easy to speak. Eliza's principles were not of such a nature;—no care, indeed, had been taken so to mould them, as to render

her proof against strong temptation, under whatever form it might come in her way. As long as she remained in seclusion, and whilst seclusion was a novelty to her, no one could be more satisfied with her lot, or more correct and estimable in her general behaviour. But the season devoted to seclusion rapidly passed away, and business again requiring Mr. Montague's presence in town, Eliza, as in duty bound, resolved to accompany him, even though town would be emptied of all its brightest attractions. Having resided six weeks at Elton, the party once more quitted it, and took up their residence in a house on Blackheath, which Mr. Montague was in the habit of occupying at this season of the year.

Two events occurred, just at this period, either of which was of itself sufficient to endanger the virtue of Mrs. Montague, and against both of which but slender hope could be encouraged that her virtue would hold out. Her father, Mr. Thornton, failed, as he had expected to fail, and the members of the mercantile world being all linked together by ties more close than are seen by ordinary observers,

in his failure not a few of the most respectable houses in town were involved. Among others, Mr. Montague's was so far affected, that though, to use a phrase in trade, it weathered the storm, that was not done without extreme anxiety, and an unusual degree of attention on the part of the different shareholders. Mr. Montague, in particular, was compelled to devote the entire day, and in many instances a good part of the night, to business. Rising at a very early hour, he departed every morning for London long before his wife made her appearance; and he seldom returned till both body and mind were so thoroughly jaded, as to require immediate refreshment in sleep. For three months it may, therefore, be said, that of her husband Eliza saw nothing; and as she never loved him from the first, it is not perhaps very surprising that habits, such as those now assumed by him, tended in no degree to excite that passion. On the contrary, she soon began to feel, that Montague was not formed by nature for her, nor she for Montague.

At this unfortunate juncture, it so happened, that, in crossing the heath one evening, she

was accosted by her old lover, Captain Cecil. The Captain, it appeared, was then on a visit to his aunt, whose house stood at no great distance from Montague's villa; and nothing could be more natural than for him to desire a renewal of that acquaintance, which in former times had constituted his chief and purest source of happiness. Alas, poor Eliza! She was not so totally lost as to be unconscious, that an acquaintance formed as theirs had been, and continued to the latest moment it innocently could be continued, ought not, under existing circumstances, to be renewed. On the contrary, she earnestly besought the Captain, in pity to both, and to herself in particular, to see her no more. But he was urgent in his entreaties; he spoke of past events as of a dream too bright and too glorious to endure; he assured her, that to passion he was no longer a slave, that she was to him no more than a sister. He talked as if the tie which once subsisted between them had wholly changed its nature; and that it was an insult to her own purity, and to his honour, to regard their intercourse as perilous. These were specious and

alluring arguments, and they were earnestly backed up by other and similar reasonings on the part of Mademoiselle Fleuret. "What did she fear? surely she was not alarmed lest her husband should become jealous? and surely it was too much in that husband to expect, that, whilst he denied her his own society altogether, she was voluntarily to shut herself out from the society of all other men besides? As far as she was concerned, were she in Eliza's place, she knew what she would do; and, what was more, unless Mrs. Montague consented to enliven their *tête-a-têtes* by an occasional visit from some third person, she positively would not consent to live longer under her roof. She was already half dead of ennui."

In an evil hour Eliza gave ear to the entreaties of the one, and to the expostulations of the other. Captain Cecil was admitted into the family on a footing of familiarity. He soon made himself agreeable to Mr. Montague, who assured his wife, that he now could leave home with an easier mind, seeing that she had consented not to live any longer in absolute re-

tirement; and to Eliza, it is needless to add that he speedily became as dear as ever. The consequences were exactly such as might be expected; he was a villain, and she ceased to be virtuous.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SUICIDE.

TIME passed, and in its passage produced those changes in human society which it usually produces. Mr. Thornton, broken in spirit, soon sank under his reverses, and was committed to the grave; whilst Mr. Montague, after the expiration of two years, during which he had treated his wife with the most unbounded liberality and kindness, received, with extreme delight, the communication, that she expected, in the course of a few months, to present him with a pledge of their love. Nothing could be more unwearied than his attention to her during this most enlivening period of a young wife's existence. She never expressed a wish which he did not hasten to gratify; and as she happened to take a pro-

digious fancy to Windsor Forest, (Captain Cecil's battalion chanced at this time to be quartered at Windsor,) he hired an elegant cottage for her not far from the Castle, whither he hurried down, every day, at as early an hour as his business would allow him to leave town. Thus matters proceeded; till at length Eliza's days were accomplished, and she was delivered of a son.

At first, that is for four-and-twenty hours after, she was pronounced by the medical attendants to be in as fair a way towards a recovery as could be wished; but at the expiration of that period a change greatly for the worse occurred. She was taken with a violent fever. This continuing unabated for two days, her life was wholly despaired of; and it was judged proper, by the physician who saw her, that the fact should not be concealed either from Mr. Montague or herself. The former received the intelligence as a man of strong mind generally receives information of a calamity more terrible than any which could befall him; the latter listened to the declaration of the medical man like a person entranced. She

gazed wildly in the face of the speaker, and after a moment or two of silence, during which the colour rushed to her cheeks, she raised herself, in spite of the fever, upon her elbow, and exclaimed,—"Die! say you that I must die?—Oh, no, no, I cannot die—I am not fit to die—I will not die—I am too guilty, too wicked to die. Where is Edmund?—where are you, Montague? Come hither," and stretching out her attenuated hand towards him,—"Come hither, that I may tell you how unworthy I have been of you. That child which you hold in your arms is not yours.—No; it is Cecil's—Cecil's child. Put it away! It is none of yours. You are dishonoured, and I——" Here her feelings overcame her, and she fainted.

So devotedly attached was Mr. Montague to his wife, that he would have willingly persuaded himself, nay, he did for the moment persuade himself, that the horrible confession to which he had just listened was the offspring, not of remorse, but of a diseased and darkened imagination. It had, however, been made in the presence of many witnesses, and could not,

perhaps, be wholly disregarded. He did put aside the child, which, at the moment, happened to be asleep in his arms, and having waited till he saw Eliza restored to her senses, he quitted the apartment in no very enviable frame of mind. On entering the drawing-room, the first person that met him was Captain Cecil. "How is Mrs. Montague?" cried the latter, advancing to meet him. "She is ill, Cecil, very ill; she is beside herself, in a state of high delirium. She has this moment stated to me a circumstance, which, could I believe it to be other than the creation of a disordered fancy, would lead me to blow your brains out before you left this room. She has accused herself and you of a crime which I need not name, and for which you at least, were you guilty of it, should answer with your life."

It were absurd to deny, that in spite of his determination to think no more seriously of the incoherent rhapsodies of his wife, Montague accompanied this speech with a look which seemed to pierce into the innermost recesses of his guest's mind. Captain Cecil could not

bear that glance. He changed colour, stammered out some unmeaning observation about the effect of disease upon the delicate nerves of a female, and attempted, in rather an abrupt manner, to quit the apartment; but Mr. Montague placed his back against the door.

"Not so, Captain Cecil," said he sternly, and yet calmly. "I am the last man in the world to harbour a groundless suspicion, but I feel it to be due, both to you and myself, that you pass not hence till I be furnished with some surer proof, either of the truth or falsehood of that unfortunate woman's confession. If you be innocent, as I trust and believe you are, you will not, of course, object to my using the privilege of a husband, and examining my wife's scrutoir in your presence; if you be guilty, here you shall remain, till your guilt be made manifest to the world, and receive its chastisement."

For a moment Captain Cecil shrank back, but, recovering himself immediately, he demanded to know whether it were Mr. Montague's intention to detain him a prisoner against his inclination; "because, if that be the case," continued he, "painful as it may be to break an

old tie of friendship, I must endeavour to force my way from this, as I would from any other place of illegal restraint."

The probability is, that a quarrel thus begun, would, at the moment, have been carried to extremities, had not the physician at the instant entered the room. Being still unwilling to commit himself, Mr. Montague so far subdued his anger as to allow the Captain to pass; but he whispered to him at the same time, that he expected to find him at his quarters, should circumstances render it desirable or necessary to look for him.

The medical man remained not long, and said but little as to the state of his patient's senses; nor was Mr. Montague by any means relieved by that little. He rather waved, than answered directly to the questions which were put to him on that subject.

As soon, therefore, as he had departed, the husband resolved to satisfy himself at once—at all events, to seek for satisfaction in the contents of his wife's writing-desk; nor was it necessary that the search should be very minute, in order to convince him of a fact, of which,

above all others, he least desired to be convinced. Her desk, work-tables, and drawers, were full of letters from Cecil; many of them couched in a language not to be mistaken; and Montague became, in one moment, the most wretched of human beings.

As was but natural, his first impulse drove him to seek immediate revenge for his wrongs. For this purpose, he seized his pistols, and hurried off towards Cecil's lodgings, fully determined to dip his hands in the blood of the man who had dishonoured him. But the villain, who had been sufficiently bold to inflict an injury, possessed not, as it appeared, courage enough to meet the man whom he had injured; he was nowhere to be found. It was said, that he had taken the road to London; thither Montague followed, but here all trace of him was lost, and the unfortunate husband of a still more unfortunate wife, was, in consequence, spared the misery which would have certainly ensued, had an opportunity been afforded him of giving way to a feeling, too powerful, under such circumstances, to be repressed, whilst the cause of its excitation is recent. He according-

ly gave up the pursuit, and for a time things went on, or seemed to go on, as if no such discovery had been made.

Contrary to all expectation, and now almost in opposition to her own wishes, Mrs. Montague's illness took a favourable turn, and she recovered. But she recovered only to feel that her guilt was known to her husband,—that all honourable persons had deserted her,—and that even her kind Mademoiselle Fleuret had turned her back upon her, and was now loud in the condemnation of one so faithless to a doating husband. Nor did her punishment end here. As long as her health continued precarious, or even delicate, she was permitted to continue an inhabitant of the cottage at Windsor; but, at the expiration of three months from her confinement, she received, from her husband's solicitor, an intimation, that that favour was no longer to be granted to her. She wrote to Mr. Montague, and, in the bitterness of humiliation and remorse, implored him to dispose of her as he would, and offered to remove to any spot where her presence might no longer sully the air which he breathed. The letter produced a powerful

effect upon the mind of the unhappy man. It tempted him not, it is true, to forgive her offence, and to receive her back again to his house and his bosom,—for Mr. Montague, with all his good qualities, was too much a man of the world to dream for one instant of that,—but it determined him not to prosecute the suit for a divorce, which he was preparing to commence, or cast her helpless and unaided upon the world.

An intimate friend of his happening to be by when the letter was delivered, he put it into his hands, and requested his advice as to the best method of disposing of her; and, at the suggestion of that friend, he resolved to settle her in some remote part of the empire, and to allow her, whilst she continued there, enough to support her—not, indeed, in splendour, but in comfort. That friend was the proprietor of the cottage described in the first of these pages. He offered it to Mr. Montague, as one well adapted to such a purpose,—the offer was accepted, and thither the lady was brought. Why Mr. Montague himself became her conductor, it is hard to say. Perhaps he was only desirous to see that the home allotted to her

was such as she might not abhor; or, perhaps some feeling of latent fondness—something of that deep-rooted affection, which not even the sins or errors of its object are able wholly to efface—directed him. Be this, however, as it may, he himself conducted her from Windsor; and, with the degree of privacy and under the circumstances detailed above, conveyed her into Kent.

My tale is almost told, for what remains of it may be related in very few words. The lady inhabited the cottage for four-and-twenty years; seeing no one, visited by no one, and apparently caring for no human being besides her son. Yet was the boy an object of care and anxiety to her to the last. As if Heaven itself had resolved to shower its severest judgments upon the adultress, the offspring of her guilty intercourse became not as other children are;—he was an idiot. Deaf and dumb from his birth, the only sounds which he was ever known to utter, were, when in pain, a sharp and ear-cutting cry,—when pleased, and in health, a sort of burr or hum, like that which the cockchafer emits as it passes your ear in

the summer twilight. Nor was this all. Of his limbs he never obtained any perfect use;—indeed, he was totally unable to walk, even after he had attained to manhood, without assistance. Yet was the mother wrapped up in her child. She led him forth in the warm sunny days, and, placing him beside the rivulet, appeared to forget her own sorrows in the light of his unmeaning smile. No music was so sweet to her ear as his burr, burr, when the balmy breezes passed over him. Indeed, if ever mother lived for a child, and for it alone, Eliza Montague may be said to have lived for her idiot-boy.

Thus was it with them, whilst he grew from the infant to the lad, and from the lad to the man. But the frame in which his feeble mind was deposited, proved not less feeble than the mind itself. He was not formed for length of days; and, ere his youth had passed, decay laid her finger over him. He drooped and faded year by year, month by month, and at last day by day. Nor did his mother intermit those attentions by his sick-bed, which she so faithfully bestowed upon him whilst in health. No

one approached his couch except herself and the medical attendant. The most painful and loathsome offices she discharged towards him with her own hands; and as the catastrophe drew near, she shut herself up in the apartment beside him, never quitting it either by night or by day. But all her care, and all the skill of the faculty, availed not;—the idiot died.

From that hour a change not more striking than alarming occurred in her whole deportment. Hitherto, she had never seemed to forget that she once filled a station in society above that which she filled then; and her dress was always such as it might have been, had she continued to fill that station. Her manner, too, though strongly tinctured with melancholy, partook in no degree of fierceness or desperation; on the contrary, it was, towards her female domestic, and the medical gentleman who visited her son, gentle in the extreme. But now she was an altered woman. She desired that a grave might be dug for her boy in a spot as far removed from other graves as possible; and gave particular directions, that when she followed, her corpse should be laid beside his. She even

attended his funeral, and listened to the service from beginning to end without shedding a tear. Nor was she ever seen to weep after. A full year she inhabited the cottage alone, having dismissed her servant, and living, no one knew how. At times she might be seen in the honey-suckle bower, or leaning over the railing of the rustic fence, but she wandered not beyond the bounds of her garden; nay, had not some of the villagers occasionally visited her, fetching milk, and butter, and other necessaries for her use, she might, and in all probability she would, have perished of hunger or neglect.

One morning, the person who was most frequently in the habit of supplying her with these articles, and to whom she was generally indebted for the lighting of her fire, arrived as usual at the door, and knocked for admittance. No notice being taken of the signal, she lifted the latch, but the door was fastened. On looking up, she saw, likewise, that the shutters remained closed, and, as she readily confessed, her heart misgave her. She knocked again, however, more loudly, and called the lady by her assumed name, but all to no purpose. Her fears having now ob-

tained complete mastery over her, she hurried back to the village, and communicated the state of the case to her neighbours. Upon this it was determined to force the door, in case a renewed effort to make themselves heard should fail; and the constable was accordingly summoned to form one of the party, by whom that service should be performed. Nor was the last resource unneeded. Having knocked and hallooed to no purpose for a considerable length of time, the door was at length burst open, and the villagers, with the constable at their head, rushed into the house. On the lower flat, all things remained in the order in which she had evidently left them on the night before. The next thing to be done was to search the upper story, which was immediately set about; and the very first step taken in the prosecution of that search, brought the truth to light. The ill-fated lady hung suspended by the neck from a beam in the roof of her apartment.

Thus died Eliza Montague, once the brightest ornament of a fashionable circle; the adored child of a doating father, and the no less beloved wife of an affectionate husband; but the victim

of an injudicious education, false friends, and a wayward and corrupted heart. The verdict pronounced upon her was, as the state of the case required, insanity; and she was laid, unlamented, and unnoticed, in the humble grave marked out by herself, beside her idiot boy.

THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.